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[image]

WARNING

This book includes gore, battles, and bloodshed, so make sure you're okay with these topics before reading.

DISCLAIMER

The cover is made by chrxnicles- ! Go check her profile out!! She's seriously amazing!

The original idea of Warrior Cats, including the Clans, territories, the way Clans work, e.t.c, belong to Erin Hunter. However, the plot of the story, Clan names, and characters belong solely to me. Don't copy nor use any of the characters unless I give you permission.

PHOTO CREDITS

I own none of the photos that I use in this book! They're all pictures that I found online!

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Hi! I'm Effie! Before you begin reading, thank you so much for clicking on the book and giving it a try! I really hope you like it! I just wanted to inform you of a few quick things before you start the book!

Okay, so, first, this is my very first fanfiction/book/story, whatever you want to call it. I don't even have the plot that well thought-out, but I did have some inspiration to write, so I'm just going to be writing and making the plot along with that. In that case, there will be parts that don't make sense! Please tell me if you didn't understand something. That would be greatly appreciated. Along with that, there will be some spelling and grammar mistakes! It would be great if you pointed those out as well!

Also, at the moment, this story is under editing. There's not going to be huge edits, but I am going to fiddle around with the time. So,

leaf-fall might jump straight into greenleaf, stuff like that, where I haven't edited yet. I will be changing several names & genders of more minor characters, but probably still enough to cause some confusion, so please keep that in mind!

By the way, if you were wondering what Mintpool looks like, she's the cat on the cover! Okay, that's all! I hope you enjoy the story!

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Started // May 5, 2021

Finished // July 14, 2021

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[image]

AirClan

Leader: Spottedstar // lithe, golden she-cat with black spots, resembling a leopard, with a white chest, belly, and green eyes

Deputy: Thistlefur // large, dark brown tom with a white chest and paws, along with a pair of blue eyes

Medicine Cat: Echoleaf // small, light gray she-cat with white stripes and a pair of knowing green eyes
Apprentice // Mintpaw

Warriors:

Mistyfur // light gray she-cat with a black paw and ear; blue eyes

Owlflight // brown tom with a white chest and face, along with a pair of amber eyes

Pebblepelt // dark gray tom with a white spot on his flanks; green eyes

Falconstrike // dark brown tom with a white chest and yellow eyes

Cherrypelt // ginger she-cat with brown eyes

Petalshine // tortoiseshell she-cat with amber eyes
Apprentice // Icepaw

Snowfrost // white she-cat with a black paw and bright blue eyes

Leafstorm // light brown tom with a white chest and sharp green eyes

Ivyfoot // black she-cat with white paws and green eyes
Apprentice // Adderpaw

Whitewhisker // large, white tom with brown eyes

Brightstorm // tortoiseshell she-cat with bright, yellow eyes

Ravenflight // pure black tom with dark dark fur and blue eyes

Crowfur // small tom with inky black fur and green eyes

Redfeather // large ginger tom with soft blue eyes

Skystorm // light gray she-cat with blue eyes and black stripes

Birdshine // brown she-cat with a white paw and amber eyes
Apprentice // Flowerpaw

Riverfrost // large, dark gray tom with a white chest and tail, along with a pair of dark blue eyes

Eagleflight // brown she-cat with a white face and tail; green eyes

Apprentices:

Mintpaw // slender, gray tabby she-cat with white markings and a muzzle, darker gray stripes, and bright green eyes

Flowerpaw // small, ginger she-cat with yellow eyes

Adderpaw // black-and-white tom with sharp blue eyes

Icepaw // gray-and-white tom with blue eyes

Queens and Kits:

Grassfeather // brown-and-white she-cat with dull green eyes
Kits // Violetkit // brown she-kit with purple-blue eyes and Duskkit // brown tom-kit with green eyes

Elders:

Graywhisker // dark gray tom with a white chest and blue eyes

Mousepelt // brown she-cat with brown eyes

Windstrike // light gray she-cat with black stripes and blue eyes

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There are other Clans. I just didn't see the need to add them because they aren't as important to the story (I'm also super lazy XD). The other Clans are FireClan, WaterClan, and EarthClan. Also, a picture of AirClan's territory is up above!

Prologue

[image]

New-leaf's the light at the end of the dark tunnel of leaf-bare, a time of year that cats welcome eagerly with open arms. Prey becomes more plentiful, the flowers bloom, and the weather warms. That's why the AirClan medicine cat loved taking walks during a new-leaf day.

In fact, that was what she was doing right now. The gray she-cat padded along the trail that'd been worn down by the countless paws that'd walked it, her green eyes scanning the territory's thick undergrowth for feverfew. Every now and then, she enjoyed the feeling of a cooling breeze fluttering through her pelt, and her ears would stick up on her head happily. It all felt so carefree, something she hadn't truly experienced since being an apprentice.

AirClan's medicine cat parted her jaws, and quickly picked out the scent of feverfew from the other new-leaf smells. Trotting over to the patch she located, she leaned down to snap off a few stems. However, just as she was about to close her teeth on the herb, a new, sharp scent spiked onto her tongue, and she jerked her head away quickly, blinking wildly in confusion.

Because now, instead of the feverfew plants that'd been there just moments ago, was a plot of mint.

Mint? The gray medicine cat's pelt fluffed. She'd walked this path countless times, and she knew the herbs that grew along this path as well as the back of her paw. Mint isn't supposed to grow here.

Puzzled, she turned to see if there was anything else odd going on, only to find a small, white tom standing right in front of her. She yelped in start and jumped away at first, before her fright melted as she recognized the tom. "Cloudpool!" Her mew was full of joy as she greeted her former mentor.

Suddenly, her brain connected the two dots. *Odd herb placements*

and my mentor? StarClan, I'm dreaming!

Cloudpool's blue eyes sparkled fondly as he swished his tail back and forth in the air. "Hello, Echoleaf. How are things in the Clan?" The last sentence was wistful and carried with it a spark of sadness; the white medicine cat had passed only this leaf-bare from greencough.

Seeing him again, healthy and spry, left a lump in Echoleaf's throat, which she swallowed around as well as she could. "Everyone's great!" she replied as cheerfully as she could manage. "Graywhisker's ill, but it's nothing some feverfew won't fix."

Cloudpool nodded. "Make sure to give him plenty of water."

"I will!" the gray medicine cat chirped, suddenly feeling like an apprentice again, eagerly awaiting her mentor's next instructions. She twitched her tail-tip, wishing for what must be the hundredth time that Cloudpool could come back; everything was easier with his wisdom.

As if he were reading her mind, the white tom reached out his tail to touch Echoleaf's shoulder gently. "You'll do fine without me, you're a very fine medicine cat. I mentored you, after all," he added light-heartedly, before switching the subject. "So, how are Snowfrost and the kits?"

The gray medicine cat felt herself straighten, eager for the new topic. "She's a great mother, and Mintkit and Adderkit certainly are energetic! They snuck out of camp yesterday, which drove Snowfrost crazy. And Mintkit's been sniffing around the medicine den - I bet she'll become a medicine cat."

Cloudpool nodded knowingly. "That's how I knew to apprentice you. When Petalshine was kitting, you knew how to find a better stick to help her than a warrior as a kit!"

Echoleaf purred. "So you knew I'd become a medicine cat based off my stick finding abilities?" she teased. "Well, are you going to prove you were right about my skills? Are you going to give me a prophecy or something?"

The latter part was meant as a joke, but it'd been something Echoleaf had feared greatly. She'd never handled a prophecy before, and without Cloudpool to guide her, she was afraid she'd mess something up. And, based off the way the white tom's eyes darkened with worry at her words, Echoleaf realized anxiously that her fear had become a reality.

An uncomfortable silence hung over the two for several beats, but Echoleaf was too scared to break it. Finally, when Cloudpool spoke, his voice was grave.

"Not a prophecy, but a warning." He glanced sideways over to the mint, and jerked his muzzle at it. "Tell me, Echoleaf, what's mint used for?"

This question seemed terribly out of the blue, and the gray medicine cat's paws tingled with bewilderment. But nonetheless, she found the reply leaving her throat effortlessly; this was an easy question to answer. "Deaths. We rub dead cats with mint to cover their decaying scent."

Cloudpool nodded, specks of worry painfully obvious in his blue gaze.

"What?" Echoleaf meowed, becoming anxiously impatient at her former mentor's silence. "What is it? What's wrong?"

The white tom took a deep breath. "Mint is used to cover the scent of death," he mewed at last. "Mint is..." He paused, shutting his eyes almost painfully. "Mint is an herb associated with death. *Mint is death.*"

"Mint is death," Echoleaf repeated to herself quietly. A sudden horror struck her when she realized what Cloudpool could be referring to, and the imagine of Snowfrost's daughter Mintkit, a kit Echoleaf had had such high hopes for, flashed before her eyes. "You don't mean-?"

"I can't be certain as to what this is for," Cloudpool interrupted gently. "All I'm here to tell you is that I've seen something. A mint patch like this one"- he waved his tail at the herb by Echoleaf's hind

paws -"blooming in the forest. Then a gust of wind blew it away and shredded it up."

The AirClan medicine cat shook her head and backed away. "I don't understand."

To her displeasure, she found herself backing right into the mint. Just as she heard the herb crunch beneath her paws, Cloudpool spoke again, his voice low.

"It blew into a storm of mint leaves, and when the scene cleared, the only thing left behind was dead bodies. Countless dead bodies. Our Clanmates. Their blood." He shuddered and then hesitated, as though he were afraid to speak the next sentence. "And a thick scent of mint hanging over it all."

Echoleaf ducked her head, her fur spiking up worriedly. "What can I do, Cloudpool?" she whispered. "How do I stop this?"

The white medicine cat blinked at her sadly. "I'm afraid I do not know. All I can do is warn you. Watch your back, Echoleaf. Be careful. The future is bloody."

She took a deep, shaky breath as she tried calming herself. At least one course of action seemed clear: to tell Spottedstar. They'll work out everything from there. But she still had so many more questions, all rising rapidly in her throat in such a bursting chaos that Echoleaf found her tongue tangled.

Before she could straighten them out and get a single question out, the forest around started to shimmer and fade away. Cloudpool's tail stood up in alarm as he glanced around. "You're waking up," he meowed quickly. "Remember, Echoleaf, be careful. The future is bloody."

"Wait!" Echoleaf mewed urgently as the white tom's image started to dim, willing herself to remain asleep for just a few more moments. "Cloudpool-"

Before she could finish her sentence, a sharp wall of mist wrapped around Cloudpool and whisked both him and the forest away. And

just like that, Echoleaf was awake.

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Word Count // 1220

Edited

Hi! So, the Prologue is out! What do you think? Please give me some feedback! I would love to hear your opinions! What do you think will happen in the future? Alright, well, I'm going to go work on the next chapter now! Bye!

Chapter 1

[image]

Despite it being early morning, the new-leaf weather that was spilling into green-leaf was warm. By the time AirClan's dawn patrol had returned to camp, most of the cats were out and about in the camp's clearing. The deputy, Thistlefur, had quickly organized hunting patrols and sent them out; before long, the fresh-kill pile was well stocked after a hard leaf-bare, and cats sat down eagerly with their friends to share prey.

It seemed there was only one cat in AirClan's camp that was still asleep, and she was laying in the nursery. Sunlight danced into the den from the entrance, and a particular beam shone on her soft, gray tabby fur, creating an illusion feeling of sunning. She was the only one left in the nursery. All the other kits had gone outside at first light and their mothers had eagerly followed, happy to leave a den they'd been cooped up in for so long.

Suddenly, the nursery's entrance rustled as a black-and-white tom-kit ducked inside, but the tabby she-kit didn't stir. Seeing this, the tom rolled his eyes and padded closer, his blue eyes glimmering with mischief. Wiggling his hindquarters, he pounced, landing on the gray tabby's back with carefully sheathed paws.

However, it did the trick. The tabby shrieked as she jerked awake, her paws flying to smack her attacker off of her. The black-and-white tom purred as he rolled off, and once she regained her bearings, the she-kit fixed him with a glare and scowl.

"Not funny, Adderkit." She leaned over and cuffed her brother's ear lightly, pretending to be furious with him.

Adderkit purred, pushing her paw away. "It is to me." He stretched his legs. "You should be up by now, Mintkit! Everyone else is!"

Mintkit yawned, flicking her tail dismissively. "I'm still sleepy. I was having the most *wonderful* dream before you woke me up."

"A dream about herbs?" her brother teased, his voice lifting an octave higher as he spoke the next sentence. "Oh please, do tell me about how you healed Spottedstar and became AirClan's best medicine cat."

The gray tabby rolled her eyes without heat. "Badger off, Adderkit. Being a medicine cat's *cool*."

"Not as cool as being a warrior," Adderkit declared, leaping to his paws and puffing out his chest.

Huffing, Mintkit reached out a paw and shoved his side, pushing him over onto the soft moss bed again. "Just let me sleep a little longer."

But Adderkit was especially persistent today, and jumped back up. "Oh, *come on*, it'll be fun! Flowerkit's just rolled up a moss-ball, and Icekit will be playing, too. Even Crowpaw said he'll join the game!"

"Alright, fine." Mintkit had officially given up on any hopes that she'd get more sleep, and as much as she hated to admit it, Adderkit was right; it was time to get up. "Let's go."

Triumph sparked in the black-and-white tom-kit's eyes as he padded out of the nursery with Mintkit trailing lazily behind him. As soon as she stepped paw outside, a joyful squeal came from her left. Glancing over, she spotted Flowerkit, Icekit, and Crowpaw tossing a moss-ball around. The black apprentice suddenly snatched it up and sprinted away, and the little kits chased after him, determined to retrieve it.

The mothers, Brightstorm and Skystorm, were off to the side, sharing tongues. Mintkit and Adderkit's mother, Snowfrost, was there as well; her white pelt was dappled by the shade, and she flicked her tail in greeting when she spotted her kits.

"Adderkit!" Flowerkit's eyes lit up when she glanced over to the nursery's entrance. "There you were! I was wondering where you'd gone off to." Her tail-tip twitched cheerfully. "I can't believe you managed to drag Mintkit out of bed."

The tabby she-kit huffed at the littler ginger she-kit's words good-humoredly, padding over to flick Flowerkit on the ear. "Now what do you mean by that? I'm always up with the sun."

Flowerkit caught on to the joke and purred. "I don't know about that, Mintkit. I'd say it's a good thing you're not aiming to become a warrior, otherwise the dawn patrols may kill you."

Mintkit grinned. "I think I'd rather go to StarClan than have to walk dawn patrols."

Adderkit wrinkled his nose. "Don't say that, Mintkit. That's got to be a taboo or something."

As his sister just shrugged in reply, Crowpaw looked behind his shoulder at the three kits, wondering why there was one less kit chasing him. Taking advantage of his distractedness, Icekit jumped at the black apprentice's leg, causing Crowpaw to drop the moss-ball and snatching it up for himself, his blue eyes sparkling victoriously as he bounded over to Flowerkit.

Crowpaw rolled his eyes fondly. "Are we starting a new round?"

Flowerkit nodded. "Yes, Adderkit and Mintkit want to join."

"Adderkit wants to join," Mintkit corrected quickly. "I think I'd rather go take a nap in the sun."

"Seriously?" Adderkit protested. "You just woke up!"

"Yeah, but sleeping in the sun and in the den are two very different things," the gray tabby defended.

"Let her go. Then we'll have even teams," Icekit meowed. "I'll be on Crowpaw's team, he may need my help."

"Fine, but once this game's over, you're joining us for the next one," Adderkit mewed firmly, twitching his pelt. "Okay, Mintkit?"

Mintkit nodded, but only half-heartedly, as her attention had flitted away from her friends to the medicine den where Echoleaf, AirClan's medicine cat, had just exited. From one glance at the gray

she-cat, Mintkit felt that something was wrong.

Echoleaf's eyes were worried and tired, as though she hadn't gotten more than a wink's worth of sleep last night. She ignored her nearby Clanmates in favor of setting some herbs out in the sunlight to dry, which was odd as she's typically an extremely social cat.

I wonder what's wrong, Mintkit thought. *Maybe she was up all night studying herbs. Ooh! Or maybe she got a prophecy from StarClan.*

The latter sounded extremely exciting to the tabby kit, and despite how disgruntled Echoleaf looked, she now felt that she'd like to be a medicine cat more than anything. Because how cool would it be to get a dream from her *warrior ancestors*?

"*Flowerkit!*" Adderkit's yowl broke through Mintkit's train of thought; the gray tabby looked over to where her brother had somehow managed the moss-ball and was running away with it as fast as his short legs could carry him, Crowpaw on his tail.

A purr rose in her throat at the sight of her friends having fun, but that was about the extent of it. Mintkit personally didn't see the appeal in running around and getting dirty, another reason why being a medicine cat seemed like a better choice for her.

Speaking of which, her apprentice ceremony was coming up, and from what she'd been told, she had to ask to be apprenticed as a medicine cat. She still had yet to do so in fear of rejection, but her recent burst of excitement was followed by a wave of courage, and the gray tabby found herself padding up to Echoleaf with a newfound air of confidence.

Hearing her paws approach, Echoleaf looked up from the herbs and a brief look of greeting flashed over her face. "Good morning, Mintkit. Is something the matter? Is someone hurt?"

Mintkit shook her head. "No, Echoleaf. I just..." She hesitated, but plunged on after a deep breath. "I was just wondering- my apprentice ceremony's coming up soon, and I'd really like to be a medicine cat. Do you think I could?"

At first, based on the long silence from Echoleaf, she thought the gray she-cat was about to decline, and embarrassment burned heavily in her belly. In fact, she was about to apologize and scurry back into the nursery when Echoleaf's voice suddenly stopped her.

"I'll have to speak to Spottedstar," the medicine cat meowed slowly. "I'm sure-" She cut off, and her eyes glazed over as if she were looking at Mintkit with a secret only she knew. "I'm sure your future will have to be very... carefully guided."

Mintkit just blinked back up at her in utter bewilderment. "Okay?"

Echoleaf glanced over to Spottedstar's den as though she hadn't heard the tabby kit. "Well, I'd better go have that conversation with Spottedstar, then. I'll see you later."

Without another word, she turned sharply and scurried across camp and into the leader's den as though the sunlight would burn her pelt if she stayed in it for too long, leaving the gray tabby staring after her more puzzled than she'd ever been in her short life.

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Word Count // 1403

Edited

Hi! Another chapter is out! What do you think of this one? Any idea why Echoleaf seemed so worried? Your opinions will be greatly appreciated! By the way, the cat at the top is Echoleaf. Okay, next chapter, here I come! Bye!

Chapter 2

[image]

The next few moons had flown by in a blur. Mintkit did normal kit things. She would play with the moss ball with her friends, tease Adderkit, pretend to hunt, of which she completely failed at, and helped Echoleaf with the herb stocks. She formed a schedule, almost, for herself. She would wake up, eat with her friends, play quickly with them before Crowpaw had to leave for his apprentice duties, and would then retreat to the medicine den, where she would help Echoleaf with simple things like sorting herbs or laying leaves out in the sun for them to dry. Flowerkit had become an apprentice around four moons ago, assigned to Birdshine. Icepaw became an apprentice a moon after that, and his mentor was Petalshine. Now, it was Mintkit and Adderkit's apprentice ceremony.

It was late in the morning, a little before sun-high. Snowfrost was lapping her tongue over Mintkit's ear, her blue eyes soft as she washed her two kits. Adderkit twisted his body, washing his back, his newly groomed pelt shining under the sunlight.

"Snowfrost, I'm almost an apprentice now!" Mintkit squeaked in protest, trying to bat her mother away. Cats were padding into the clearing, waiting for the ceremony to start, shooting amused glances at Snowfrost, who was still washing her kit as though she were a newborn. "I can do this myself!"

Her mother backed away, her blue eyes gleaming with pride. "I know." She sat back on her flanks, watching the two of them as they busied themselves, washing every bit of their pelts that they could reach, making it fluffy and soft. "I'm sure Talonfrost would have been very proud of you." Her voice was soft with grief when she spoke.

Mintkit blinked at the mention of her dead father. He died soon after she and Adderkit were born, killed by a fox. She hadn't known him that well, so his death hadn't impacted her too badly. She had

Snowfrost and Adderkit, and that was all she needed. Her mother, on the other paw, deeply mourned her dead mate. She ducked her head in response.

"Let every cat old enough to catch their own prey gather by the Clanledge for a Clan meeting!" Spottedstar's voice travelled throughout the camp. The few cats that were still in their dens slipped out, making their way to the ledge.

"Well, it's time for your ceremony." Snowfrost stood up, seemingly shaking off the grief. "I know you two will do great."

"Thanks," Adderkit chirped, Mintkit echoing him. After their mother gave them one last lick over their ears, she padded away, joining the rest of the Clan within the crowd.

"Come on!" Mintkit beckoned to her brother. "It's our apprentice ceremony!" The two kits rushed over to the Clanledge, where Spottedstar was blinking down at them.

Their leader was sitting at the top of the ledge, her spotted golden fur gleaming under the warm sunlight, making her look regal. Every once in a while, a breeze would flutter by, ruffling her fur. Her eyes were happy as she blinked down at the two kits that would soon become apprentices. She waved her tail, beckoning the two kits forward.

"Adderkit," Spottedstar meowed, "you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you become a warrior, you shall be known as Adderpaw. Your mentor will be Ivyfoot. I hope she passes all she knows on to you."

Mintkit scanned the clearing, catching sight of Ivyfoot. The black she-cat looked very pleased, stepping up as Spottedstar called her.

"Ivyfoot, you are ready to take on an apprentice. You have received excellent training from Thistlefur, and you have proven yourself to be an excellent hunter and fighter. You will be the mentor of Adderpaw, and I hope you'll pass everything you know down to him."

"I will, Spottedstar," Ivyfoot promised, her eyes glimmering, as she stepped forward towards her new apprentice. Adderpaw leaned forward as well, tapping his nose against his mentor's, his eyes joyful.

Spottedstar then turned to Mintkit. The tabby's paws tingled with excitement. *It's my turn! I'm going to be a medicine cat apprentice!* "Mintkit, you have reached the age of six moons..."

The kit droned out slightly, flicking her ears, excitement bubbling inside her. She scanned the clearing, catching sight of Echoleaf. The medicine cat's green eyes were conflicted, swirling, as though a storm was raging inside her mind. This made Mintkit's pelt prick. She didn't look particularly excited to be receiving an apprentice. *What happened? Did I do something wrong?*

"Riverfrost will be your mentor," Spottedstar finished. At that, it suddenly snapped Mintkit, or, Mintpaw, now, out of her thoughts, as horror flashed through her. *No! Riverfrost's a warrior! I thought I was supposed to be a medicine cat apprentice!*

"Wait!" Mintpaw squeaked. The leader paused, blinking down at the apprentice, confused. Heat pulsed through the tabby as she realized every cat's eyes were on her now. However, she wouldn't back down. She'd played hunting games as a kit; they'd bored her, and she was never any good at them! She was much better with herbs! There was no way she *could* be a warrior! She'd never pass any of the tests! "I wanted to be a medicine cat apprentice."

Spottedstar's eyes narrowed. "Echoleaf did bring that up..." She gazed through the crowd of cats to the gray she-cat. "However, we decided that it was best if you were a warrior apprentice."

Mintpaw blinked, a feeling of despair filling her. She wanted to ask why, but she knew better than to contradict the Clan leader. She could feel the Clan's confused stares on her pelt, and her paws pricked uneasily. *Riverfrost must be so annoyed with me. Who even interrupts their leader, anyway?*

Spottedstar cleared her throat to continue. "As I was saying, Riverfrost will be your mentor-"

"Wait, Spottedstar." The golden she-cat paused, yet again. Echoleaf stepped forward, her gray fur fluffed, but the storm whirling in her eyes seemed to have stopped, as though she'd come to a conclusion. "I'll be Mintpaw's mentor."

The AirClan leader's eyes flared with surprise. "But when we were discussing it, we decided it was best not to. Are you sure?"

Confusion stabbed Mintpaw as she looked from her leader to medicine cat. *Discussing? What do they mean? They've talked about my apprenticeship? Why wouldn't they want to assign me to the medicine cat training?*

Echoleaf took a deep breath. "Yes, I'm sure. Perhaps it would be better to teach her peace and healing instead of fighting."

Now, the tabby was certain that her Clanmates were just as confused as she was. However, she pushed her feeling of puzzlement aside, focusing on the excitement and hope that she would be able to become a medicine cat.

Spottedstar bowed her head. "Very well. Mintpaw, your mentor shall be Echoleaf and you shall be assigned to medicine training," the golden she-cat meowed. "Echoleaf, you have received excellent training from Cloudpool, and I'm sure you'll work hard to bring us another wonderful medicine cat."

"I'll do my best, Spottedstar." Echoleaf's tone, compared to Ivyfoot's, sounded much more solemn and serious. Her green eyes were flitting with an emotion Mintpaw couldn't understand as she reached forward to tap her nose against her mentor's.

The Clan erupted into cheers.

"Mintpaw! Adderpaw!" The two new apprentices' names echoed throughout the clearing, finally dying away after Spottedstar flicked her tail.

"I'm sure our two new apprentices will work very hard," she meowed. The golden she-cat waved her tail, dismissing the Clan from the meeting, and leaped down from the Clanledge. The Clan

slowly moved away after her, starting to resume their patrols.

Echoleaf padded up to Mintpaw, who was sitting besides Adderpaw, bathing in excitement and joy. "Come on," the medicine cat meowed. "It would be best to take a quick tour of the territory first. I can show you some herb spots on the way."

"We'll come as well," Ivyfoot added. "Adderpaw has to get to know the territory as well."

The two littermates exchanged cheerful looks as they followed their mentors out of the camp. Everything that had happened at the apprentice ceremony was pushed out of her mind as Mintpaw hurried after Echoleaf. She was an apprentice now, and she would work her very hardest to help her Clan.

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Word Count // 1399

Edited

Hi! Another chapter is out! Any thoughts on this one? Any ideas or guesses about the apprentice ceremony and what Spottedstar and Echoleaf had discussed? I put a picture of Spottedstar at the top. Okay, that's all! Bye!

Chapter 3

[image]

Mintpaw trotted after Echoleaf eagerly, her paws tingling with excitement as she padded out of the camp for the first time. Adderpaw was right on his tail, his blue eyes sparkling as well, his fur fluffed. As the two padded through the barrier, Mintpaw felt her breath catch in her throat as she took in the sight of the forest. Tall trees sprouted from the ground, reaching high up. Its large branches spread out, green leaves sprouting from them, like a canopy. Breezes whistled through the trees, brushing the cats' pelts, making the forest feel light and airy.

"Wow," Adderpaw breathed as Ivyfoot slipped out of the camp.

"It's magnificent, isn't it?" the black she-cat meowed, stepping forward. "That's how I felt when I first saw our territory, too."

"It's definitely the best one out of all the Clans!" Mintpaw chirped.

Echoleaf's purr rumbled gently. "I sure think so, but I believe the other Clans would disagree." She flicked her tail. "Come along. It's best to teach you the borders as well."

"I'll bring Adderpaw to the Training Hollow first," Ivyfoot meowed, waving her tail to the black-and-white tom.

"Okay!" Echoleaf replied. "I'll take Mintpaw to visit WaterClan's border, then EarthClan's."

"Have fun!" Mintpaw chirped to Adderpaw as he followed his mentor into the woods.

"You too," her brother called over his shoulder as disappeared into the forest.

Echoleaf touched her tail-tip to Mintpaw's shoulder, bringing the tabby's attention back onto her. "Come on; let's go. I want to get

back to camp by sunset. Then we still have time to go over a couple herbs."

Mintpaw bowed her head, cheerful, as she trotted after Echoleaf. Her dream of becoming a medicine cat was finally happening.

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The gray tabby pushed her way through the bushes after Echoleaf. Her paws were sore after travelling across the entire territory, but the excitement pulsing in her refused to let her stop and rest. The medicine cat had shown her WaterClan's border, along with the scent line, and now stopped at EarthClan's.

Mintpaw opened her jaws, giving the air a gentle sniff. EarthClan's scent drifted inside. It smelled like a damp forest.

"This is EarthClan's border," Echoleaf meowed. "As medicine cats, we're allowed to go across. But, EarthClan doesn't know you're a medicine cat yet, so it would be best for you to wait until the Gathering before trying to cross any borders."

Mintpaw nodded, taking in what her mentor was telling her. "Okay!"

The AirClan medicine cat nodded. "There are some herbs right here. I can pick them out for you and show you some." Eagerness spiked Mintpaw's pelt, and she nodded. As Echoleaf turned around, about to make her way down the border, the bushes on the other side of the border rustled, making both cats stop in their tracks and turn around. From EarthClan's territory, five cats slipped out.

Echoleaf lowered her voice, whispering to Mintpaw. "It's a border patrol," she mewed softly. EarthClan's patrol was staring at them now, their pelts fluffed, as though wondering what a medicine cat and an apprentice was doing at their borders.

Mintpaw blinked at them, taking in their looks. At the front of the patrol was a tortoiseshell she-cat with brown eyes, blinking at the medicine cats suspiciously. Behind her was a white tom with black stripes, an orange tom with green eyes, and two cats around

Mintpaw's age. One was a dark gray tom with hints of cream and yellow-green eyes and the other one was a she-cat who had plain dark gray fur amber eyes.

The AirClan medicine cat raised her voice, addressing the cat that was at the front of the patrol. "Greetings, Petalmist," she mewed.

Petalmist's fur lowered slightly. "Hello, Echoleaf." Her voice was polite. "May I ask what you are doing at our borders?"

"I'm just showing my new apprentice, Mintpaw, around," Echoleaf replied, waving her tail towards the gray tabby, her voice slightly edged.

Petalmist nodded. "We've got new apprentices, too." Behind the politeness, Mintpaw could hear warning, as though saying that they were just as strong. "We have two new ones, actually. They're right on this patrol." She nodded towards the tom and she-cat that seemed to be the same age as Mintpaw. "Leafpaw-" She waved her tail to the tom "-and Amberpaw."

"Lovely. That's wonderful for your Clan," Echoleaf mewed. She didn't seem to have any interest in continuing the conversation any further. "Well, we must get going now." The idea of showing the gray tabby herbs that grew by the border seemed to have been thrown away. "It's almost sunset."

Petalmist nodded. As the medicine cat turned around, about to beckon to her apprentice, the tortoiseshell called out. "Wait!"

Echoleaf paused, her fur fluffed with puzzlement.

"I remember that Rainpool said if any of us saw you to tell you that he had a question." Petalmist's fur fluffed as she thought. "I think it was that he was wondering what you would do for a cat who has had a cough for days and none of the herbs are helping."

Echoleaf blinked. "You can go explore while I talk about this," she whispered quickly into Mintpaw's ears. "Don't wander too far. We'll be done soon." The gray she-cat stepped forward, always happy to help. "Well, if I were him, I would try..."

As much as Mintpaw wanted to learn about being a medicine cat, she couldn't quite understand nor participate in any of the discussions yet. So, she darted into the forest, making sure not to go too far, as Echoleaf had instructed. The border already reeked heavily of EarthClan's scent, telling her that the patrol had left Petalmist and had gone off to mark the borders. As she trotted through the forest, sniffing the air, bushes from the other side rustled again, and the EarthClan tom popped out.

The tabby's pelt fluffed with surprise, but she recognized the tom instantly, for Petalmist had introduced him. It was Leafpaw. *Maybe I can make a new friend. Medicine cats are supposed to get along with the other Clans.* She cleared her throat, trying to make herself look as cheerful and kind as possible. "Hi, Leafpaw!"

The brown tom's eyes glimmered suspiciously as he blinked at her. "Hello..." He twitched his tail-tip. "What are you doing by our borders?"

Mintpaw fluffed up her fur. "I'm a medicine cat," she meowed, "so I'm not going to steal any prey."

At that declaration, the EarthClan tom seemed to calm down. "What are you doing, then? I thought medicine cats were supposed to stay in camp."

"No! We come out to collect herbs-" Mintpaw cut herself off in her defense, noticing that Leafpaw's eyes were glimmering playfully and his voice was teasing. She huffed, pretending to be upset. Deep down, though, she was happy that she seemed to have made a new friend.

"So what's your name?" Leafpaw mewed. "Echoleaf didn't introduce you."

"I'm Mintpaw!" the tabby chirped back cheerfully. "I was just made an apprentice today."

Leafpaw puffed out his chest. "I've been an apprentice for half a moon now!"

Mintpaw purred. "That's cool."

"Why would you want to be a medicine cat?" Leafpaw's voice was teasing once more as he wrinkled his nose. "Herbs smell yucky."

Mintpaw fell in with his teasing. "Herbs heal cats. Why would you want to be a warrior? You guys just create fighting and wounds."

Leafpaw's eyes widened with mock hurt. "If there were no warriors and injuries, you'd be out of a job!"

Mintpaw purred, agreeing. "I suppose so. The Clan works well in that way, doesn't it?" Her new friend nodded in agreement.

Suddenly, Echoleaf's scent grew stronger. Moments later, the gray medicine cat had pushed her way into the clearing where Mintpaw was. "Sorry that took so long," she meowed. "We won't have time to look at any herbs today."

"It's okay!" Mintpaw mewed back, although she couldn't distinguish the little swirl of disappointment. "At least you were able to help other cats."

Echoleaf nodded, suddenly noticing Leafpaw was here. "Oh, hello, Leafpaw. I think Petalmist's looking for you."

Leafpaw nodded. "Okay. I'll get going now. Bye, Mintpaw."

"Bye!" Mintpaw chirped, watching as the brown tom disappeared into the forest once more. As she turned around, about to follow Echoleaf back to their camp, happiness surged through her. She'd made a new friend!

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Word Count // 1394

Edited

Hi! Another chapter is done! Any thoughts on Leafpaw? Feel free to tell me your opinions and thoughts, they're always appreciated! The cat at the top is Leafpaw! On another topic,

this is a little concerning, but I haven't planned anything for the next chapter yet... oh well, I'll figure something out. Bye!

Chapter 4

[image]

Mintpaw padded out of the medicine den, her gray fur fluffed as the early morning sun greeted her. She watched as Spottedstar padded out of the leader's den, her green eyes heavy with sleep as she padded to the fresh-kill pile, waiting for the other members of the dawn patrol to join her. Ivyfoot and Falconstrike hurried out of the warriors den as Adderpaw padded from the apprentices den.

Time had flown by. It was almost time for Mintpaw's first Gathering! She couldn't believe that she'd been an apprentice for almost a moon. She'd learned so much! As Adderpaw trotted by to join the patrol beside the fresh-kill pile, she flicked her tail in greeting, her jaws carrying a stick with mouse bile, preventing her from speaking. Her brother twitched his ears in response.

The gray tabby turned away, making her way to the elders den. The elders wouldn't like to be woken up this early, but Echoleaf had told her that she had to check up on Graywhisker, who had caught a fever, at dawn each morning, and that she should just take the mouse bile with her.

Mintpaw stuck her head into the den, her pelt fluffed. "Good morning." Her mew was muffled.

Inside the den, three shapes were curled up, asleep, their bellies rising and falling softly. At her mew, a brown she-cat lifted her head, her eyes sleepy and annoyed as she blinked at the apprentice.

"Why are you here so early?" the brown she-cat meowed, huffing. "I was having a wonderful dream!"

Her much clearer voice woke up her denmates. Graywhisker, a gray tom, lifted his head from his paws as well, his blue eyes flickering. From beside him, a light gray she-cat yawned, awoken.

"Sorry, Mousepelt," Mintpaw meowed, addressing the brown she-

cat, "but Echoleaf told me to check on Graywhisker's fever. She said I should just do the tick checks at the same time."

"The silly old tom's the reason we're being woken up early," the light gray she-cat purred affectionately. "At least I get the ticks off early as well."

Graywhisker grunted, his voice cracked slightly with the fever. "You should be thanking me, then!"

Mousepelt was the only one who hadn't caught onto their jokes, and flicked her tail irritably. "Well, hurry up, then."

Mintpaw bowed her head, slipping into the den, setting the stick down gently. She pressed her nose to Graywhisker's pelt. Thankfully, it felt a lot cooler than it did the day before, showing that he was healing. "Looks like the feverfew is working!" she mewed cheerfully. "You probably just need some water, then." Turning around, she grabbed the stick, and gently began dabbing it on the tom's pelt.

"Remember when we were apprentices?" Graywhisker grunted. "I remember having to take out Whitefoot's ticks. I hated that!"

"Me, too," the light gray she-cat agreed.

"We all did, Windstrike," Mousepelt meowed. "Tick duty was definitely the worst job. But, now, we can just relax." She blinked wistfully, and Mintpaw knew that if she could, she would go back, even if it meant having to do apprentice duties.

"I would still rather be an apprentice," Windstrike mused. "There were other things than apprentice duties. Remember fighting off FireClan?"

Mintpaw pricked her ears. They didn't share a border with FireClan, so why would there be much fighting?

Graywhisker nodded. "FireClan was the worst! That Clan gets angry too easily! You do one wrong thing and they decide that you're enemies!" He shuddered. "Thank StarClan we don't share a border with them."

Mousepelt flicked her tail, agreeing, as Mintpaw moved on to Windstrike's ticks. "That Clan has too much spirit, I tell you," she meowed. "There's nothing wrong with spirit, but too much of it can lead you down the wrong path! Sometimes you just need to calm down."

"I remember when my mother used to tell me nursery stories about FireClan," Windstrike mewed. "She said that the founder, Fireclaw, was vicious. He always wanted to fight. Had too much energy and spirit, perhaps. Too proud. That was what led to his death." Her fur fluffed, and Mintpaw moved to Mousepelt. "His blood still runs in some of the cats of FireClan today. Hopefully they don't share his traits."

"That was a long time ago, Windstrike," Mousepelt chided. "There's no way any of him could live down in his descendants! Even FireClan themselves don't like him, although they are still very hot-headed."

Mintpaw finished with the last of the ticks, pulling back. "Okay, your ticks are finished now," she meowed. "I'll bring you some prey."

"Bring it to us later," Mousepelt meowed. "Right now we just want to get some sleep."

As murmurs of agreement rang around the den, Mintpaw bowed her head, agreeing, then slipped out. She returned to the medicine den, her mind whirling around the conversation the elders had just had, washing her paws. FireClan does sound terrible. *Well, perhaps they aren't as bad as the elders make them out to be. Perhaps it's just the elders exaggerating.* She blinked outside the medicine den into the clearing, where more and more cats were waking up. *It's nothing I'll have to worry about, at the very least. We don't share any borders with FireClan, and I'm a medicine cat.*

"Mintpaw!" Echoleaf's call snapped her out of her thoughts.

"Coming!" Pushing any and all thoughts of FireClan out of her mind, Mintpaw bounded towards the back of the den, towards her mentor, eager for the day.

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Mintpaw padded through the forest, every bit of her prickling with joy. The sun was bright, warming up the forest, and the birds were chirping. The sound of prey scattering around filled her ears as she made her way down the well worn path. As she turned around a tree, she spotted a patch of marigold, and her pelt fluffed up with excitement. *Echoleaf will be very happy that I found this!* She bounded forward, leaning down. However, as she plucked a couple of stems, the golden flowers disappeared, replaced with lush, green leaves.

Confusion spiked the young tabby as she recognized what the leaves were. *Mint? Why's the mint here? Where did the marigold go?* She dropped the couple of leaves she had in her jaws, which had also turned into mint. *We don't need that.*

Mintpaw turned around, about to continue her walk, when a gust of mist shrouded the forest, weaving around. The trees and bushes disappeared, and the bird songs and scattering footsteps fell silent.

The gray tabby felt her fur prickling uneasily, backing up, until she stepped into the patch of mint. It was still here. However, other than that, all she could see was mist. "Hello?" she called out.

Suddenly, the mist swirled. It gushed around her, making her shut her eyes. As the wind settled, she blinked her eyes open, and what she saw struck her in horror. The dead bodies of cats, blood seeping through them, was littered around the ground of the forest. So many of them. Amongst the bodies, she spotted Adderpaw and Snowfrost.

"No!" Mintpaw yowled, leaping forward, but the mist prevented her from doing so. "I have to save my kin!"

Suddenly, her eyes caught onto Echoleaf, and relief flooded her. She would save Snowfrost and Adderpaw.

"Echoleaf!" Mintpaw yowled. "Help them!"

Her mentor turned towards her, her face blank, no life in her green eyes. Suddenly, she collapsed as well.

"No!" Horror pierced Mintpaw. Finally, the mist let her free, and she leaped forward, bounding into the clearing. However, something odd reached her as her paws landed in the clearing. There was no scent of blood, death, or cats. All that covered the clearing was a thick scent of mint.

Suddenly, the mist swirled once more, wrapping around her. The young tabby was much too confused to figure out what was going on, struggling with the winds, trying to get to her brother and mother.

As the mist finally settled once more, her eyes landed on a mysterious tom, one she'd never seen before. The tom was huge, with broad shoulders and muscles. His eyes were yellow-green, much like Leafpaw's, but his pelt was different. It was a mixture of gray, dark gray, and cream, with a white chest. Confusion and shock kept Mintpaw in place as she watched the tom rear up, landing a powerful blow to a smaller, brown tom.

It took Mintpaw a second to realize who the brown tom was. "Leafpaw!" she shrieked, trying to get to her friend. The EarthClan tom staggered as the larger tom's eyes narrowed mercilessly, striking him again. Leafpaw collapsed, his eyes blank, as though life had seeped from him. "No!"

She felt herself shaking, her paws collapsing from underneath her. Her eyes felt wet and she covered them with her tail, curling herself up. The mist swirled again, erasing the terrible image.

"Beware the future," a voice boomed. "Be careful. Watch your steps. Do not let your heart rule over your head..." The voice drifted away, but Mintpaw didn't want to look up. She didn't want to see another terrible future.

"Mintpaw!" A new voice, Echoleaf's, filled her ears. "Come on, the Gathering patrol is leaving!"

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Word Count // 1534

Edited

Hi! Look, two chapters in one day! Right, so I know the ending is probably confusing, but it's supposed to be, because it's supposed to be a warning and sort of a prophecy! I hope you liked it! I wasn't really sure how to write something like that, though, so if you have any tips, I would love to hear them. Any guesses on the future? Right, I'm going to go write the next chapter now! Thanks for almost 100 reads! Bye!

Chapter 5

[image]

Mintpaw scrambled up, wobbling, due to her sleepiness. Her pelt was bristled, as though she had been jump scared. Her eyes were still blurry with sleep and her head was slightly dizzy from the suddenness of the awakening. *Am I still in that awful dream?* As the sound of water trickling floated into her ears and the scent of herbs drifted towards her, relief seeped through her bones as she realized that she was now awake. *What in StarClan was that?*

Echoleaf's head poked out from the herb storage. Her green eyes flashed with amusement as she blinked at her apprentice. "What's wrong? You look like you've just seen a badger!"

Mintpaw forced her fur to flatten, debating on whether or not to tell her mentor about the dream. "Nothing," she mewed, deciding to keep it a secret from Echoleaf for now.

Her mentor seemed to accept her answer without a second thought. "Okay, then. Go grab some prey, and quickly! The Gathering patrol is about to leave. I'll be out there soon." With that, she disappeared back into the cave.

For a moment, Mintpaw's pelt pricked with confusion, before the memories of the events washed back into her mind. Echoleaf had informed her that they were going to a Gathering, and she'd decided to take a quick nap before they left. That nap had brought the dream.

The gray tabby shook out her pelt, then bounded out of the medicine den. The setting golden sunlight beamed in her eyes, making her squint, as she made her way to the fresh-kill pile, a feeling of dread swirling in her belly. The clearing, much unlike her thoughts, was cheerful. Cats were talking and sharing prey before they had to leave. By the apprentices' den, Adderpaw and Flowerpaw were gulping down a thrush. Crowpaw, who had become Crowfur, was crouched beside them, eating a mouse.

Icepaw lay nearby, his head on his paws, looking full and resting.

"Hey, Mintpaw!" Adderpaw's voice made the tabby turn towards him. "Want to share?"

At the sight of her brother, Mintpaw's mind flashed back to her dream, and now lifeless his body seemed, laid on the ground. She almost didn't notice Flowerpaw's fur fluff up slightly with annoyance. *Who put thorns in her pelt?*

"Sure!" she answered cheerfully. Turning towards the prey pile, she snatched up a vole and bounded towards her friends.

As she neared, Adderpaw scooched away from Flowerpaw to make room for her, seemingly making the ginger she-cat even more annoyed, sending pulses of confusion through Mintpaw. They had been such good friends as kits, and now it seems that Flowerpaw was annoyed with the gray tabby. *What happened? We've barely spoken. There's nothing I could've said that would annoy her.*

Ignoring Flowerpaw's attitude, Mintpaw laid down her vole, taking a bite. "So, how's your warrior training going?"

"It's fine." Flowerpaw's answer was curt. "So, Adderpaw, do you want me to introduce you to some apprentices at the Gathering? I know loads of cats!"

The black-and-white tom shrugged. "Sure. That would be cool."

Mintpaw's pelt pricked uneasily, feeling as though she was getting in the way. Before she was able to say something, the sound of pebbles clattering made her glance towards the leader's den, where Spottedstar was exiting.

"We're leaving for the Gathering now!" the golden she-cat announced, her voice travelling clearly through the camp.

Mews echoed throughout the clearing as cats scrambled to their paws, promising their friends that they'd tell them what happened. Mintpaw hurriedly gulped down the rest of her vole as she spotted Echoleaf exiting from the medicine den. Crowfur pushed himself to his paws and went to join the patrol, Flowerpaw right on his tail.

"Tell me what happened, okay?" Icepaw mewed as Adderpaw scrambled to his paws as well.

"Of course!" Adderpaw chirped back. "Are you coming, Mintpaw?"

The gray tabby swallowed roughly, nodding, and pushed herself up. "Of course! Bye, Icepaw!"

"Bye. Goodbye, Adderpaw!"

As Mintpaw bounded to join the patrol, she couldn't help but sense some coldness in Icepaw's voice. A feeling of jealousy pricked her. It seemed as though she wasn't as close with her friends as she used to be. *Maybe that's just because you're busy training. It's not their fault!* She shook out her pelt. *I need to remember to spend more time with them. Maybe that's why Flowerpaw's annoyed.*

"Is everyone here?" Spottedstar's green gaze swept over the patrol. "Okay, let's go." She flicked her tail, leading the cats out of the camp.

Excitement surged through Mintpaw as she followed her leader, pushing all worrying thoughts out of her mind. For now, she was focused on one thing, and one thing only. The Gathering.

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All different scents bathed Mintpaw's tongue as they drew near to the Gathering clearing. She could clearly smell EarthClan's damp forest smell and WaterClan's fishy scent. However, there was a new scent, one that smelled of crisp grass and sun. It must be FireClan.

As the AirClan patrol burst into the clearing, Mintpaw's eyes widened with surprise. Cats from all different Clans were gathered there, their scents mingling together. Her fur fluffed, a little nervous and shy.

Spottedstar trotted to the center of the clearing, where a large oak tree was planted. There, she greeted a white she-cat with black stripes and blue eyes, a dark brown tom with amber eyes, and a blazing orange tom with sparkling green eyes. Thristlefur, the AirClan deputy, was right on her tail. *Those must be the other leaders,*

Mintpaw realized.

Adderpaw and Flowerpaw brushed past her. The two apprentices soon had disappeared in the crowd of cats, making Mintpaw's pelt prick only more with uneasiness. She had hoped they could all hang out together. Soon, the AirClan patrol had practically split up, disappearing in the large group of cats.

Echoleaf padded up to her apprentice, brushing her pelt gently with hers. "Come on. Let's go meet the other medicine cats."

At this, Mintpaw felt her ears prick cheerfully. "Okay!" She'd met them at the half-moon meeting, and was more than happy to see them again.

Echoleaf nodded, leading her apprentice through the crowd of cats to the back of the clearing. Mintpaw recognized them easily. There were four of them, sitting beside some bushes. She wasn't able to recognize them by pelts only; she hadn't really paid attention to their appearances, for she'd been so entranced by seeing the Starpool for the first time.

As they got closer, her brain began whirling, slowly and hesitantly recognizing the medicine cats. One was a dark gray tom, Raincloud, medicine cat of EarthClan. His blue eyes spun towards them, lighting up in greeting. Beside him sat a gray-and-white tabby. She must be his apprentice. Mintpaw tilted her head, intrigued. *I didn't see her at the half-moon meeting. She must be really new!*

On the other side of the bush sat two black cats. One was Nightpool, medicine cat of FireClan. His gaze turned towards Echoleaf and Mintpaw as well, flicking his tail in greeting before returning to his discussion with Ravenleaf, the WaterClan medicine cat. The black she-cat's green eyes were warm as she blinked at the arriving AirClan cats.

"Echoleaf!" Raincloud greeted, jumping to his paws.

"Hello, Raincloud," Echoleaf replied, her voice just as warm.

Raincloud blinked at Mintpaw. "Well, I suppose we should do

introductions. This is my apprentice, Cloverpaw. She became an apprentice around a week ago, which was why she didn't attend the half-moon meeting."

Echoleaf ducked her head in greeting, Mintpaw copying her action. "And this is my apprentice, Mintpaw."

"Hi!" Mintpaw chirped. *A new friend!*

"Hello." Cloverpaw blinked warmly.

Before either cat could get another word in, Spottedstar's yowl rang across the clearing. "Let the Gathering begin!"

Mintpaw hurried to plop herself down next to Cloverpaw, wrapping her tail around her paws as she leaned forward eagerly. The Gathering is starting!

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Word Count // 1314

Edited

Hi! This chapter's pretty boring; nothing much happens, other than the new character introduction, and there isn't even that much interaction with Cloverpaw. Still, any thoughts? Based on just what you've read, what do you think of Cloverpaw? The next chapter should be a lot more interesting! I thought about adding it in this chapter, but then it would've just been way too long. Also, in case you're confused, the Starpool is the Moonpool in this world. Okay, the cat at the top is Cloverpaw! That's all, bye!

Chapter 6

[image]

Mintpaw watched as the leaders climbed up onto the Great Oak, going on their own branches. Spottedstar climbed to the highest branch, sitting down and wrapping her tail around her paws. Silver moonlight splashed onto her fur, making her golden pelt glow. Thristlefur sat at the bottom, staring up at the leaders.

"Moonstar? Would you like to go first?" Spottedstar addressed the white she-cat.

Moonstar nodded. "Sure!" She stepped forward onto her branch. "EarthClan is doing well." Her mew travelled across the clearing. "Prey is plentiful due to the newleaf weather, and there's still more returning. We have a kit, Snowkit, born to Featherfur, and two new apprentices: Leafpaw and Amberpaw."

"Leafpaw! Amberpaw!" the cats cheered.

Mintpaw raised her head, calling out the apprentices' names as well. She called out Leafpaw's extra loudly, blinking cheerfully at her friend, who had dipped his head down to give his chest fur a couple of embarrassed licks. However, she could tell he enjoyed the attention.

Moonstar stepped back down. "Spottedstar?"

Spottedstar's green eyes gleamed as she uncurled her tail and stepped forward. "AirClan is doing very well, too," she meowed. "Prey runs very smoothly for us. We have a new warrior, Crowfur, and a warrior apprentice, Adderpaw, and a medicine apprentice, Mintpaw."

"Mintpaw! Adderpaw! Crowfur!" the Clans yowled in greeting.

Mintpaw felt her pelt fluff up joyfully at the sound of her name being called. She was able to hear Leafpaw's voice amongst the

many, and felt even more pleased at that. Raising her head, she cheered out Adderpaw and Crowfur's name along with the other cats.

As the cheering died away, Spottedstar stepped back, waving her tail at the dark brown tom. "Tigerstar? Would you like to go next?"

Tigerstar dipped his head. "FireClan is doing as good as the other Clans. Prey is very plentiful and is running well. The streams in our territory are now unfrozen, too. We have one new apprentice: Cobrapaw."

As Cobrapaw's name raised into the air, Mintpaw turned towards where everyone was looking to catch sight of the tom. Who she saw made her breath hitch in surprise and fear stir in her belly. It was the tom she'd seen in her dream! He had the same broad shoulders and muscles, larger than the apprentices around him. He had the name narrowed green eyes and the same fur pattern and color, along with the same cold aura that sent a shiver down the tabby's spine.

A feeling of coldness seeped up her pelt. *This can't be real! He's the tom from my dream! The one I saw kill Leafpaw!* Suddenly, Cobrapaw's eyes swirled towards her, as though he could feel her staring at him. His green eyes sparkled with frost, narrowed, before moving away. Mintpaw felt cold, frozen in place. In her dream, Cobrapaw had so viciously slammed Leafpaw, no mercy in his gaze. This was a cat she should stay away from.

As the FireClan tom's name fell into silence, Tigerstar stepped back, indicating to the final leader to give his report. However, Mintpaw barely heard any of it. Her mind was still whirling around Cobrapaw and the dream. *StarClan must be warning me to stay away from him. But why'd they give me that warning? What does it prove? He killed a cat in my dream! Am I supposed to help somehow?*

"The Gathering is over!" Moonstar's voice shocked Mintpaw out of her thoughts. "There will be time to share tongues before the Clans leave."

As voice started echoing around the clearing, Echoleaf touched her

nose to Mintpaw's fur, frowning. "Are you okay? You look as though you saw a badger again."

Mintpaw pulled away. "Yeah, I'm fine. Sorry."

Echoleaf shook her head. "It's fine. Perhaps you'd feel better if you spent some time with your friends. After all, you have been spending all day on your apprentice duties." She nodded towards Leafpaw. "Look, there's Leafpaw. Maybe you'd feel better after talking with him."

Mintpaw glanced over. Indeed, Leafpaw was there, sitting with a couple apprentices, including Adderpaw. However, Cobrapaw was there, too, and the tabby wasn't sure if she wanted to talk to him. But, if she refused, then Echoleaf would know something is wrong. "Okay." Pushing herself to her paws, she padded over hesitantly.

Leafpaw caught sight of her as she weaved through the cats. "Mintpaw!" he called, waving his tail. "Come talk with us."

A bubbling cheerfulness filled the tabby as she trotted over, a little more of a spring in her step. "Sure!" As she reached the group, Leafpaw scooched over to make room for her to sit down. As she plopped herself down in that spot, she realized she was directly across from Cobrapaw. The FireClan tom's fierce gaze was on her again. Did Leafpaw know that he was sitting with a cat that was going to kill him in the future? "So, what are you guys talking about?"

"Not much," Leafpaw replied. "We were just complaining about apprentice duties."

Mintpaw purred, nodding. "I hate them! They take up so much time!"

"Right? Sometimes cleaning out the dens takes me all afternoon!" Amberpaw complained.

Adderpaw nodded. "I would much rather be hunting."

"I don't know about hunting." Cobrapaw cut in. His voice was deep, like one that might scare kits. "I prefer fighting."

Mintpaw couldn't help but have another shiver run through her. *Fighting. Of course he does.* "I would just rather be in the forest," she meowed. "It's always nice and peaceful."

"Of course you would," Leafpaw teased. "Otherwise you would just be spending time sorting herbs, and that's boring."

Mintpaw purred in response, giving the brown tom a friendly flick on the ear. Cobrapaw's eyes were fixed on the two of them. His green gaze was cold, along with another emotion that the tabby couldn't recognize. However, whatever it was, it made the playfulness in her fade, and she lowered her tail, clearing her throat awkwardly.

It was Adderpaw that picked up the conversation again. "I never understood Mintpaw," he meowed, mock seriously. "Who would want to spend time with herbs?"

Mintpaw purred, rolling her eyes. "Say that again when you're sick or injured." This got a chuckle out of Leafpaw.

As much as the tabby enjoyed spending time with the other apprentices, she couldn't shake the uneasiness that she had from Cobrapaw. She was more than thankful when Spottedstar called the AirClan patrol over, announcing that it was time to leave. After mewing a hurried goodbye to the apprentices, Mintpaw had practically raced over to her Clanmates, wanting to get as far away as possible from the FireClan tom.

She fell in place beside Adderpaw as they made their way back to camp. Both cats were silent as their shadows flickered through the woods, perhaps too tired to speak. Mintpaw's mind had returned to the thought of Cobrapaw. *Why would StarClan send me a dream about him? If it's to tell me that he's going to kill Leafpaw, why send it to me, and not Leafpaw? What can I even do?* As she blinked up at the twinkling sky, it made her feel small. She was just one cat in a huge world, after all. What could she even do? She had no idea why StarClan sent her that dream, but her mind was made up. No matter what it was, she was going to help save Leafpaw. That was a promise that she made to herself.

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Word Count // 1214

Edited

Hi! This chapter gives a little more information on the dream! Not a lot, but now you know who the mysterious tom is! Any thoughts on him?

Also, I was thinking of making a Name That Apprentice book, but it'll be circled around the apprentices in my book. For example, Leafpaw doesn't have his warrior name yet, and so I would be interested in seeing what names you can come up with! Of course, though, I already have his warrior name (and all of the cats') planned! But, it would still be interesting to compare them! Maybe I'll change my plan or maybe you'll just be able to guess exactly what the name is! So, would you be interested in that idea? Of course, there will be prizes! The only prize idea I've come up with is votes. Like, if you get 1st place, maybe you'll get 5 votes or something. If you have any other prizes you'd prefer, you can tell me!

Right, well, that was just an idea I came up with! By the way, Cobrapaw is the cat at the top! Okay, bye!

Chapter 7

[image]

The next few moons had flown by in a blur. Mintpaw's mind felt occupied. Every single day, she was panicking over the dream and the fact that Cobrapaw was real, along with keeping up with her apprentice training. It felt as though she had never had a second of peace. Whenever she went to go share tongues with StarClan, they would offer her no help, just repeating the dream and warning over and over again. She was tired of seeing Adderpaw's dead body, tired of seeing Echoleaf collapse and the life flow out of her green eyes, and she was tired of seeing Cobrapaw strike Leafpaw down, with no mercy in his eyes, especially since StarClan offered nothing other than that.

Why would StarClan keep sending me that same dream? It looks really important; shouldn't they have sent it to a more experienced medicine cat, like Echoleaf? The same thought - one that had been repeated over and over in the past moons - were recalled in Mintpaw's mind once more as she laid down a pile of comfrey, spreading it out under the sun.

"Mintpaw?" Echoleaf's voice snapped her out of her thoughts and made her glance back towards the medicine den. "Are you okay?" A frown was etched on the gray she-cat's face as she padded forward. "You seem to have been really keeping to yourself all these moons." Her fur spiked uneasily. "Like you're planning something."

Echoleaf's last words drifted off, so quiet that Mintpaw wasn't even sure if she'd heard it. "It's nothing," the tabby mewed, deciding to ignore that. "I guess I just haven't gotten enough sleep."

Her mentor nodded. "Taking a walk in the forest always helps. Why don't you go collect some tansy, then come back and take a nap? You need your energy for the Gathering tonight."

Mintpaw nodded. "Okay, sure." She looked forward to getting out of the camp. Perhaps it would give her some peace and quiet. "I'll be

back by sunset, although I don't have time for a nap, but that's fine."

Echoleaf swished her tail in acknowledgement. As the gray tabby padded towards the entrance of the camp, she noticed the AirClan medicine cat crossing the camp towards the leader's den, where Spottedstar was, her pelt fluffed. Mintpaw decided to ignore it, hurrying into the forest. As soon as trees wrapped around her, it gave her a safe feeling inside. The air was crisp and warm. Greenleaf had arrived. Her mind completely blanked out, debating over the dream again, and her paws led her, barely thinking.

What can I do to stop Cobrapaw? He didn't even seem like a cat in that dream. She shivered, remembering the FireClan tom's eyes. He seemed to have no guilt nor regret as he watched Leafpaw tumble to the ground. *I don't even have any battle training. I can't even hunt, on that thought.* Mintpaw shook out her pelt. *But what had caused the death of all those other cats? And why, for StarClan's sake, did they all smell of mint?* She recalled the eerie voice again. *"Don't let your heart rule over your head."* She felt another shiver run down her spine. *What was* that *supposed to mean?*

Suddenly, EarthClan's scent drifted heavily in her jaws, making her stop in her tracks. Mintpaw blinked, taking in her sight around her. *I'm such a mouse-brain! I've reached the EarthClan border.* As she was about to turn around and leave, the bushes from the other side rustled, and Cloverpaw and Leafpaw jumped out, apparently locked in a heated argument.

"Voles are the best prey," Leafpaw argued, his brown pelt fluffed. "They're the easiest to catch and they taste the best."

"Since they're so easy to catch they're also plain," Cloverpaw shot back. "Thrushes are a lot more rare!"

"How would you know?" Leafpaw mewed. "You don't even hunt!"

Mintpaw couldn't help but purr in amusement at how stupid the argument was. And what made it even more funny was that both of her friends looked very upset, with their pelts bushed and eyes glimmering.

At her purr, the argument paused, and both cats glanced over at her.

"Oh, hello, Mintpaw!" Cloverpaw chirped.

"Hi!" Mintpaw mewed back, clambering forward. "What were you arguing over? Prey?"

Leafpaw pretended to look offended. "How could you think that we would argue over something so mouse-brained? We were arguing over prey *and* how tasty they are. Of course, we also need to factor in the fact of if they're common or not." This earned an eye-roll from Cloverpaw and a twitch of whiskers of amusement from Mintpaw.

"So, what are the two of you doing out here?" the tabby asked. It was quite odd to see two apprentices out by themselves without their mentors.

"Rainpool sent me to collect marigold," Cloverpaw began.

"And I decided to come along to protect her," Leafpaw finished, looking very serious. "There are many dangers in the forest."

As another purr racked through Mintpaw, Cloverpaw let out a squeak of protest. "*What?* You just wanted to come along because you didn't want to clean the elders den! Don't pin this on me!"

"Well, that is true," Leafpaw agreed. "Cleaning the elders den sucks."

The three dissolved into purrs, enjoying each other's company. For that short moment, the dream completely slipped Mintpaw's mind. Her stomach was bubbly with laughter and joy erupted inside her.

"So, what are you doing out here?" Cloverpaw asked once the three cats' purrs faded away.

"Echoleaf told me to collect some tansy!" Mintpaw chirped. "I told her I'd be back by sunset."

The white-and-brown she-cat whisked her tail, waving at the sky. "Well, have you got anything yet?"

Mintpaw followed her gaze, her eyes widening with shock as she realized the sun was already dipping downwards. "Oh, mouse-dung!" *I spent an entire afternoon thinking about the dream!* Her pelt burned with shame. *I could've been helping my Clanmates instead.*

Thankfully, neither of her friends asked why she didn't have any herbs. "It's okay," Leafpaw meowed. "You still have some time."

"And it's greenleaf now," Cloverpaw added helpfully. "There should be some tansy around everywhere."

Mintpaw nodded. "Right, thank you! I should get going now." Waving her tail in farewell, she darted into the forest, panic pounding inside her. Quickly, she scouted around, locating a patch of the herbs easily. Leaning down, she plucked as many as she could carry. Carefully, so they wouldn't drop, she headed back towards the camp. *Hopefully Echoleaf can't tell that I didn't do much gathering.*

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Her mentor didn't seem impressed with the amount of herbs Mintpaw brought back. Which, she supposed, was fair, since she'd been out all afternoon. A mouthful didn't seem like much when that factor was brought in.

However, instead of scolding her like Mintpaw had thought she would, Echoleaf moved on swiftly from the topic. "Well, are you ready to leave for the Gathering?" She eyed the gray tabby nervously. "Stay close to me, okay?"

Mintpaw's pelt pricked with confusion. However, her mind was fuzzy, and all she wanted to do was sleep, so she didn't bother with asking Echoleaf about her intentions. "Can I stay at camp tonight instead?" She stifled a yawn.

Echoleaf's pelt pricked. "I suppose," she meowed hesitantly. "I'll have to ask Spottedstar first." She exited the den swiftly, leaving the sleepy tabby by herself.

Mintpaw yawned. She was much too tired to try and figure out why Echoleaf was acting weirdly. All she wanted to do was to curl up in

her nest and sleep.

Soon, her mentor reappeared. "Spottedstar says it's fine," she meowed, padding into the herb storage, "but I'll need to give you some poppy seeds?"

"Why?" Mintpaw mewed, scrambling towards her.

Echoleaf hesitated. "Because, as you said, you haven't gotten much sleep." She padded out from the herb cave with a leaf carrying a singular seed. "Here, eat this. It should put you to sleep quickly."

Mintpaw didn't argue. Leaning down, she lapped up the seed, and trotted to her nest, curling up. Her mind was so hazy that she almost didn't hear Echoleaf's goodbye. It was only seconds before sleep claimed her, and a familiar mist swirled around the gray tabby.

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Word Count // 1372

Not Edited

Hi! So, this is another filler chapter! There's nothing much in here. I just wanted to show Leafpaw, Mintpaw, and Cloverpaw's friendship. Well, mainly Leafpaw and Mintpaw's. Anyway, there was also one other rather important part. Why do you think that Spottedstar and Echoleaf wanted Mintpaw to eat the poppy seed? I would love to hear your guesses! Some of you already have splendid predictions for the future! The next chapter will probably be a lot more exciting! Oh, and the Name that Apprentice is out! If you want, go check it out! Leafpaw's chapter is already posted! Okay, I'm going to go write the next chapter now! Bye!

Chapter 8

[image]

Mintpaw felt panic rising up inside her like bile as the mist wrapped around her once more. *Oh, no! Can't I just have one sleep without the mist?* Her pelt pricked as she began to back away, but there was no escaping from the gray swirls, which seemed to advance even faster as she moved, wrapping around her, covering her completely.

The tabby shut her eyes, preparing herself for the sight of Adderpaw and Snowfrost's dead bodies. At least she knew what was going to happen. Taking a deep breath, she blinked her eyelids open. As soon as she took in the view, confusion pricked her pelt. There was no sight of Adderpaw or Snowfrost, nor was there any of the dead bodies that normally would litter the ground. However, now, a forest surrounded her, its lush green leaves splattered with red. Beyond the trees, she could hear yowling.

Suddenly, the bushes rustled, and Leafpaw jumped out. In her previous dreams, she'd barely taken in how Leafpaw looked. All she cared about was how her friend was doing. Now, it seemed impossible to look past his appearance. He was much larger, and his muscles were more developed. There was not a single wound on his pelt, much contrary to the roaring sounds of battle that rang through the woods. His green eyes were spiked with fear and anger. There was no joking or laughter inside them, which was what she was used to. The heavy emotion in his gaze sent a shiver down her spine. She'd never seen him like this before.

Mintpaw shook her pelt as relief filled her. *This is a different vision. I've never seen this before. Why's StarClan showing it to me? It doesn't matter,* she decided, blinking at the EarthClan tom. *All that matters is he's alive.* She waved her tail, trying to catch her friend's attention, but he was staring right through her.

A snarl formed on Leafpaw's face. "What are you doing here?" he demanded, his voice rough. "Where are my kits?"

Mintpaw's pelt pricked with surprise, and she whirled around, only to find her standing face-to-face with Cobrapaw. The FireClan tom's expressions were cold as he blinked at the tom, cold amusement sparkling in his green gaze, as though Leafpaw was just a mouse that he was playing with. He seemed to find the brown tom's fear amusing.

Cobrapaw flicked his ears. He, too, was much larger, although he was the same as Mintpaw had remembered in her dreams. She supposed that because she'd first seen Cobrapaw in her dream as a new cat, she'd been more focused on his appearance than Leafpaw's, who she'd already met. "I don't have your kits." His meow was the same as his eyes; cold amusement, as though he was laughing at Leafpaw's fear with no sign of sympathy for the EarthClan tom.

Leafpaw glared up at Cobrapaw. Even though the larger tom loomed over him, he dug his claws into the ground, refusing to back down. "Mamba told me you did!" he snarled. "Give them back!"

Mintpaw pricked her ears at the unfamiliar name. *Mamba? Who's that?*

Suddenly, the bushes behind Leafpaw rustled. A tabby gray she-cat padded out. Her fur looked soft and was fluffed as she padded forward, looking very graceful despite the tension that hung in the air. However, her eyes were the exact opposite of her appearance. They were narrowed with hate as she blinked at Cobrapaw.

"What are *you* doing here?" the she-cat demanded with a hiss. "I thought you'd never come back!"

Mintpaw's pelt pricked. *Her voice sounds familiar...* Suddenly, realization shocked her from head to paws. It was her! In the future! Chills ran down her spine. She leaned forward, trying to touch her nose to her future self's pelt, but she completely stepped through the tabby she-cat.

"I'll always come back," Cobrapaw meowed, his voice icy. "I need to get my revenge, don't I? I did make a vow. And I don't like breaking vows; it would be very selfish to do so."

"Innocent cats are getting hurt!" Mintpaw's future self shrieked. "How fox-hearted are you?"

Leafpaw stepped forward, touching his tail-tip to the tabby's shoulder. "Do you have my kits?"

The older Mintpaw's eyes softened as she turned back to Leafpaw. "They're in those bushes," she meowed, waving her tail towards a patch of undergrowth. "I promised you I'd take care of them."

"Thank you," Leafpaw purred, his eyes flickering uneasily from Cobrapaw to her, whereas the future Mintpaw seemed to have no fear that the older tom was practically slicing them to pieces with his eyes. "I'm sorry that I had to put you through that trouble."

Future Mintpaw flicked her tail. "It's no problem."

Leafpaw bowed his head, trotting hurriedly to the bush. As soon as he moved, Cobrapaw sprang, claws extended, landing squarely on top of the EarthClan tom. A shriek of pain pierced through the air as blood poured from Leafpaw's pelt and he collapsed on the ground. Life practically slipped away from him as his eyes went blank.

At the same exact time, the future Mintpaw and present Mintpaw yowled the same thing. "No!"

The mist swirled around Mintpaw once more, erasing the scene, leaving her trembling. *What happened? That's not what I'm used to seeing!* Her paws collapsed from under her as horror spiked each and every part of her body. *That's so different from the other dream!*

"This is what will happen if you follow your mind," the mysterious voice boomed. Mintpaw wanted to shout at it, wanted to bat it away, but she was shocked into silence, quivering. "But if you let your heart rule..."

The mist quivered, and it disappeared, introducing her to a different scene. Now, this was the one that she normally saw. Dead bodies littered the grounds, the earth soaked with red. Blood splattered the trees, and a thick scent of mint bathed in the forest. Adderpaw,

Snowfrost, Echoleaf, Flowerpaw... so many bodies that Mintpaw was able to recognize, all dead. It seemed as though nobody was alive. The forest was deathly silent, although the tabby could hear the piercing shrieks that had already faded echo through the trees. Tears pricked at her eyes. *Take me away!*

Suddenly, the undergrowth behind her rustled, making her jump. A she-cat padded out, dragging Leafpaw's dead, limp body. The she-cat was slimmer and more lithe than Mintpaw's future self, although many of their other features were similar, including the green eyes and gray tabby fur. Is this Mamba?

The she-cat spat Leafpaw's body onto the ground, watching it tumble down the hill with others. Cobrapaw appeared after her, his eyes glimmering with satisfaction. "Clans are weak," the she-cat spat. Her voice sent shivers down Mintpaw's spine. It sounded cold, manipulative, and evil. Everything she didn't like. "They preach so much about loyalty, but when it's actually time for that, they back down." She waved her tail. "That's how we defeated them."

Cobrapaw nodded, his voice deep and gruff. "That's true. And, now, we finally have our revenge."

Mintpaw felt frozen to the spot. *Are all the Clans gone? Dead?* The mist moved again, erasing the scene.

"That's what would happen if you let your heart rule completely," the voice boomed. "But, there's a very small chance that it would happen." The voice paused. "It *should* never happen. If any sign of it seems like it will, we'll put a stop to it as best as we can."

Mintpaw looked up helplessly at the mist. "What can I do? What does this even have to do with me?" However, as she pricked her ears, desperately searching for answers, the dream jerked, and she was wide awake.

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Word Count // 1288

Edited

Hello! I know this chapter is pretty dark, compared to normal Warrior Cat books. But, now there's more information on the future! Any predictions, interpretations, or guesses? I'd love to hear them! Poor Leafpaw always seems to die. I had so much fun writing this chapter, I don't even know why- I think there's something wrong with me, LOL. The picture at the top is Adderpaw! Okay, goodbye!

Chapter 9

[image]

The next moon, much like the previous ones, flew by in a flash. Mintpaw's mind was now focused completely on the dream that she'd received that Gathering night. Thankfully, she was sent no other dreams, even offering her some peaceful time to sleep, but whenever she visited the Moonpool, she was greeted by the same, terrible mist.

Bright light shone into the medicine den, scattering across the floor, dancing around as clouds floated by it, covering it then letting it through again. A gentle breeze blew through the den, cooling down the cats, a much needed change from the hot and stuffy den that it was before. A pile of herbs lay by Mintpaw as she treated her very first patient. Pushing every thought of the dream out of her mind so she could focus, she leaned down, gripping the thorn on Whitewhisker's paw. Once she was sure that she had it firmly, she pulled, yanking the thorn out of the white tom's paws. Instantly, she began lapping at it, cleaning the wound, as Echoleaf watched, judging her skills.

"How did you get the thorn stuck in there?" Mintpaw asked in between licks.

Whitewhisker winced. "I stepped on it while I was out on a hunting patrol. I was so focused on the prey that I didn't notice."

The gray tabby nodded, pulling away. "Be more careful next time." She turned to the herb pile besides her, selecting a dock leaf and chewing it up. She spat out the poultice, rubbing it onto the warrior's paw. "There you go! You can come back tomorrow, and I'll put some more dock leaves on to heal it."

Whitewhisker dipped his head. "Thank you, Mintpaw," he meowed, standing up. With a wave of his tail, he half-limped out of the den.

Echoleaf trotted forward as Mintpaw hurried in cleaning the herbs.

"Good job!" she mewed. "That was well done!"

Although her words were kind, there seemed to be something that she was hiding under her peppiness. Mintpaw ignored it, simply bowing her head, her pelt burning with pride. Although a thorn in a paw was a very common thing, she couldn't help but feel happy that she'd treated her very first patient.

Her mentor turned away. "There's a Gathering tonight," she meowed. "Do you think you can go this time?"

Mintpaw paused, thinking. After her dreams and visions, she wanted nothing less but to never see Cobrapaw again. However, if she didn't go to a Gathering two times in a row, other cats would think something is wrong. And, besides, there was a small chance that she'd bump into the FireClan tom. "Okay."

Echoleaf ducked her head. "Very well. You'd better go prepare and get something to eat now. We're leaving soon."

Mintpaw nodded. She stuffed the dock away hurriedly, bounding out of the medicine den. Adderpaw, Flowerpaw, and Icepaw were crouched to one side, sharing prey. She thought for a moment about joining them, then decided against it. She'd rather spend time by herself. She had a lot to think about, after all.

Reaching the fresh-kill pile, the gray tabby grabbed a shrew, and carried it under a tree, crouching down. As she sank her fangs into the prey, she sent a quick prayer up to StarClan, hoping that she wouldn't bump into the FireClan tom at the Gathering.

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As Mintpaw pushed her way into the clearing, the moon was shining brightly above them, its silver light splashing down onto the Gathering Clearing. Flowerpaw brushed past her, trotting away to join her friends from other Clans. Glancing around, the gray tabby realized that all the other Clans had already arrived. *I guess we're late.* Echoleaf weaved through the sea of cats towards the medicine cats. However, from a quick look, the tabby could tell that Cloverpaw wasn't among them. And, she couldn't spot Leafpaw

anywhere in the crowd. Her paws itched as her Clanmates began spreading out as well. She took a step in the direction where Flowerpaw had disappeared. *Maybe I can join her...?*

Suddenly, she felt a pair of eyes on her pelt. Whirling around, Mintpaw met Cobrapaw's gaze. Instantly, she felt her belly drop. She couldn't even look at the FireClan apprentice anymore without picturing his vicious strikes!

Cobrapaw didn't drop his gaze, continuously blinking at her, all emotions covered up. Mintpaw's pelt pricked uneasily. *What in StarClan does he want?* A thought flashed through her mind. *Maybe if I talk to him, I'll be able to change him for the better!* Happy with the idea, she began making her way over to the tom.

The closer she got, though, the more intense his stare became. Scenes flashed through her mind as she padded towards him. Cobrapaw leaping on Leafpaw, the brown tom's shrieks piercing through the air. Cobrapaw slashing at Leafpaw's muzzle, each blow powerful, until the tom fell to the ground. Cobrapaw's evil green gaze sparkling as he looked around at the dead cats in the clearing. Each one sent a shiver down her spine.

Stop being a mouse-heart! she scolded, forcing herself to move faster. *He hasn't done any of those things yet! And, if you manage to do this correctly, he never will!*

Finally, she approached Cobrapaw. "Hi."

"Hello." The FireClan tom's reply was simple.

Mintpaw waved her tail, a feeling of awkwardness creeping up her pelt. "Can I sit here?"

Cobrapaw nodded, somewhat warmly, and patted the spot next to him. The gray tabby plopped herself down, wrapping her tail around her paws, clearing her throat, searching for some sort of conversation. However, before she could say anything, Cobrapaw spoke.

"Where were you in the last Gathering?" he asked, his green eyes

curious.

Mintpaw shrugged. "I was tired, so I didn't come." She twitched her tail-tip teasingly. "Why, were you looking for me?"

At first, Cobrapaw looked defensive. Then, spotting her teasing expression, his melted into a playful as well. "No, way!" he mewed, teasing right back. "Leafpaw was. I would never look for you! Why would I want to?"

Mintpaw faked mock offense. "How dare you say that," she purred, swishing her tail. *Cobrapaw's not that bad after all,* she thought as the larger tom gave her a gentle nudge. *He's just like Leafpaw, actually.* She blinked. *What could've gotten him to do something as bad as to kill someone?*

Before she could exchange any more words with the FireClan tom, Tigerstar's voice rang across the clearing. "Let the Gathering begin!"

Mintpaw barely paid attention to anything the leaders were saying. Although she knew that she shouldn't, she and Cobrapaw were exchanging jokes and brief conversations the entire time. Although the FireClan tom seems really cold from the first glance, once you show him any sort of affection, he warms up instantly.

"The reports are over," Spottedstar announced, jolting Mintpaw away from Cobrapaw's ear, where she was whispering a joke, earning a purr from the tom. "There will be time to share tongues before the Gathering ends."

"I'm exhausted," Cobrapaw yawned. "I could probably fall asleep right here."

Mintpaw twitched her whiskers with amusement. "Me, too." She felt a confusion prickle at her pelt. When she'd padded over, she had expected Cobrapaw to be cold and rude. Never had she expected, or even thought of a possibility, of the friendly, joking tom that she'd spent the Gathering with.

Suddenly, Cobrapaw's pelt started to spike. "Here comes Flamefur," he whispered.

Mintpaw shot her new friend a puzzled look. Before she could ask him what he meant, a ginger she-cat stalked over. She seemed much older than Cobrapaw, an elder, perhaps. The old she-cat's eyes glimmered with distaste as she blinked at the FireClan tom.

Flamefur blinked at Cobrapaw, her amber gaze sharp. "I still can't believe you're allowed to come to Gatherings!" she meowed angrily. "This is a place for the Clans, not Fireclaw's descendants!"

Mintpaw's eyes widened with shock. *Cobrapaw's a descendant from Fireclaw?* The bits of Fireclaw's story that she'd heard from the elders rang in her mind, sending a shiver down her spine. Him being Fireclaw's descendant would explain why Flamefur was glaring at Cobrapaw.

Cobrapaw kept his expression calm, although Mintpaw could tell that he was holding back a bundle of fury. "Whether I'm a Fireclaw descendant or not, that doesn't matter," he meowed. "I'm still a part of FireClan, and so I'm allowed to come to Gatherings."

Flamefur huffed. "Huh. I thought Tigerstar agreed you weren't coming anymore."

Mintpaw caught the flash of betrayal and fury in Cobrapaw's gaze. Touching her tail-tip to the tom's shoulder, she mewed, "Is there anything that you needed?"

Flamefur turned her gaze on the gray tabby. "Yes. Do you know where your elders are?"

The medicine cat apprentice waved her tail towards Windstrike, Graywhisker, and Mousepelt. All three of them were crouched down by a bush. "There they are."

Flamefur nodded, making her way towards them. As Mintpaw turned towards Cobrapaw, she could tell that his joking mood was over. She gave him a gentle nudge, feeling immense sympathy for the FireClan tom. *It must be terrible, if everyone in his Clan acts like Flamefur.* He acknowledged her movements with a small flick of his tail. The two sat in silence, not speaking, until the Clan leaders called them away, ready to head back to the camp.

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Word Count // 1555

Edited

Hi! There's more of Cobrapaw's personality in this chapter! Yay! Also, I've planned out the rest of the book now! I used to only have the basic plot in my mind, but now I have it more detailed, including some plot twists! Okay, thank you so much for reading and 100+ reads! I really appreciate it! Bye!

Chapter 10

[image]

It was a normal greenleaf day, one like many others. The sun was shining, bringing a warm atmosphere to the forest. The sky was a beautiful shade of blue as white, fluffy clouds drifted across it. It was a little after sun-high. Most cats were out and about in the forest, enjoying their day, and training, hunting, and patrolling. Others were sprawled out inside the camp under the light, asleep after a morning full of patrols. Adderpaw was among them, curled up under the sun, his tail wrapped around his nose. Mintpaw was padding out from the medicine den, carrying a bundle of marigold, laying the damp herbs out under the sun to dry.

As she spread out the golden flowers, her tail-tip twitched with conflict and a sigh puffed out from her. *Cobrapaw was so nice! His personality was basically the same as Leafpaw's. I can't imagine him as a muderer.* She shuddered as she thought of her dream again. As much as she hated to admit it, there was no doubt. The cat that had struck down Leafpaw was no other than her new friend.

From behind her, Echoleaf padded out of the medicine den. Her gray fur was soft as a gentle breeze rustled it, gleaming under the sunlight. She glanced around at the camp and napping cats. "Come on," she mewed to Mintpaw. "It looks like nobody needs us right now. It would be a nice time to practice some hunting." She blinked at her apprentice, as though saying that the tabby was a bad hunter, but her voice was completely teasing.

Mintpaw purred, her whiskers twitching with amusement. She knew that she was absolutely horrible at hunting. "Sure! I'd love some practice!"

Echoleaf bowed her head, waving her tail, and led the tabby out of the camp. "So, what do you remember from the last hunting session?"

Mintpaw tipped her head, thinking. "I think I can remember the

crouch..."

Her mentor nodded. "That's a good start. Do you remember how to scent out the prey?"

The tabby shook her head. Echoleaf had taught her last time, but it had slipped her mind now. Whenever she opened her jaws, all she was able to scent was herbs.

"Try to remember the prey scents that you smell at the fresh-kill pile," Echoleaf mewed, "then try to find them out here."

"Okay," Mintpaw mewed hesitantly. She opened her jaws. She had a mouse this morning, and since that was the most recent piece of prey, it was what she was trying to find. She was able to scent feverfew, marigold, and comfrey, and her tail-tip twitched with frustration. *Maybe there just isn't any prey around here?*

Turning back to face Echoleaf, her mentor's jaws were open as well, scenting the air. Catching Mintpaw's eyes, Echoleaf angled her ears towards a bush.

Mintpaw opened her jaws once more, trying to scent the prey that her mentor was hinting at. Amongst the scent of berries, leaves, and herbs, a thick, musky scent bathed her tongue, making her tail stand up with excitement. She recognized that scent. *Mouse!*

The gray tabby dropped down, trying to remember the crouch that Echoleaf had taught her. However, with one glance towards her mentor, she could tell that she had no idea what to do, either. *I'll just have to figure this out.* Mintpaw moved forward, trying to keep her paw steps light. However, before she even neared the mouse, the prey had scented her. With the sound of leaves rustling and little paws kicking against the ground, the mouse was gone. The tabby sat up, disappointed.

"That was... better than last time," Echoleaf offered, padding forward. She touched her tail-tip to Mintpaw's shoulder. "I know it's difficult, but it's important that you learn how to hunt."

"But that's not fair," the gray tabby complained. "Warrior

apprentices don't need to learn herbs!"

"And you don't need to learn how to fight," Echoleaf countered. "Hunting is just a good, basic skill to have." She sighed. "I don't really know how to teach it, though..." Her eyes narrowed with thought. "Perhaps I can ask a warrior to help."

Before Mintpaw could reply, the sound of paw steps thundering towards them filled the air. Soon, a gray she-cat, Mistyfur, burst into the clearing, her eyes wide.

"Oh, Echoleaf, there you are!" Mistyfur mewed, her voice relieved. "Grassfeather got a thorn in her paw! We need help!"

Mintpaw scrambled towards the gray she-cat, but her mentor waved her tail, stopping her. "I'll take care of Grassfeather myself," Echoleaf meowed. "It's just a thorn, nothing special. Meantime, you can work on your hunting skills." The medicine cat's voice was firm. Flicking her tail, she led a worried Mistyfur away, disappearing into the forest.

The gray tabby sighed, watching her Clanmates disappear. She'd much rather be helping out in the medicine den than hunting. But, since she was out here, she'd better spend some time practicing. Mintpaw opened her jaws, and set to work.

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"Mouse-dung!" Mintpaw pushed herself to her paws, shaking dirt off her pelt. A vole had escaped from her clutch, disappearing into the undergrowth, leaving the tabby's tail-tip twitching with frustration. She'd been out in the forest for hours now, trying to catch a piece of prey, and was presented with no luck.

As she opened her jaws to try and scent more prey - she was getting better at that - a damp scent bathed her tongue. Somehow, again, her paws found themselves at EarthClan's territory. She peeked across the border line, hoping to spot Cloverpaw or Leafpaw. She could use a break from all the hunting. As the gray tabby turned around, her wish was granted. The bushes rustled, and Leafpaw padded out, two shrews dangling from his jaws.

Mintpaw's tail shot up with joy at the sight of her friend. "Leafpaw!" she mewed, purring in greeting.

The brown tom set down his catches, blinking. "Hi, Mintpaw! What are you doing here?"

"Don't make fun of me," the medicine cat apprentice warned, although Leafpaw's eyes were already glimmering with gentle amusement. "I'm trying to hunt."

The tabby could see that Leafpaw was desperately trying to keep himself from laughing, which caused her whiskers to twitch with amusement.

"I suppose you haven't caught anything yet?" Leafpaw teased.

Mintpaw huffed. "No."

Leafpaw purred. "Well, if it makes you feel any better, I probably can't do anything with herbs." He whisked his tail. "Want some help?"

Mintpaw nodded eagerly. "Yes, please!" If she could come back with a piece of prey, then maybe she could spend more time on herbs.

"So pretend I'm a vole," Leafpaw meowed. "Try to catch me."

Mintpaw snorted with amusement, disappearing into the bushes. Opening her jaws, she caught Leafpaw's scent. Crouching down, she crept forward, using the same techniques that she had this afternoon. She could tell that Leafpaw was right behind the bush. She bunched her muscles, about to jump, when a flash of brown fur flew over her head. Leafpaw bowled her over, not hurting her, more playfully.

"Hey!" the tabby complained, kicking her friend off. "You're supposed to be the prey!"

Leafpaw purred, sitting up. "You were upwind! I could scent you! You were also so loud. Your paws were crunching every leaf and stick." He motioned with his tail. "Your crouch was also off. Okay, you're supposed to do it like this." He crouched down, and Mintpaw

followed him, feeling somewhat awkward.

"Good!" Her friend sat back up, blinking at her pose. "But like this." Leaning down, he nudged her paws around. "Okay, that's good. Try on that leaf."

Mintpaw sprang off. Surprise filled her as she landed squarely onto the leaf. There was so much more power into her jump. Her ears pricked cheerfully as she blinked back towards Leafpaw. Her friend's eyes were flashing proudly, as though he were a proud father. "Good job!"

"Thanks!" Mintpaw mewed, padding off. "Should I try on real prey now?"

When Leafpaw gave a curt nod, she turned away, opening her jaws. She was getting better and better at scenting out prey. Soon, she'd found the scent of a mouse. Following it, she crouched down, trying to shuffle her paws into the crouch Leafpaw had shown her. Taking a deep breath, she moved forward, remembering to step around the leaves and twigs. Turning around a bush, excitement pounded inside her when she caught sight of the mouse. Twitching her tail, she could feel Leafpaw's gaze on her pelt. Kicking off, the tabby unsheathed her claws, trying to aim for the mouse. A joyful burst of surprise filled her as she felt her claws sink into the mouse's pelt.

"I did it!" Mintpaw mewed, her voice bursting with excitement.

"Good job!" Leafpaw purred.

As the tabby leaned down, picking up the mouse, trotting back to the brown tom. *I'm so lucky to have Leafpaw as a friend.* Her stomach whirled suddenly as she remembered her dream, and felt sick again. *That doesn't matter right now.* She pushed the thought out of her mind. *All that matters right now is that Leafpaw's a great friend and he's here, healthy and alive.*

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Word Count // 1529

Edited

Hello! I didn't mean for this chapter to be so long. It was just meant to be a filler! But, I guess, it's important to the story to show Mintpaw and Leafpaw's friendship! Anyway, any thoughts on this? Sorry this chapter took so long (I was working on Name that Apprentice!). Okay, I'm going to go work on the next chapter now. Goodbye!

Chapter 11

[image]

The sky was dark gray at the time Mintpaw woke up. She normally got up by dawn, and by then, the sky would be a light color. A feeling of heaviness drowned her as she blinked outside of the medicine den. It looks like there will be rain. She twitched her tail-tip irritably. *Rain makes everything harder, but I guess it's needed for plants to grow.*

Echoleaf's nest rustled as the medicine cat woke up as well. "Good morning."

Mintpaw glanced back towards her mentor, her pelt rustled cheerfully. "Morning, Echoleaf!" she chirped back as the gray she-cat pushed herself up and padded to the opening of the den as well. The medicine cat parted her jaws, sniffing the air.

"There's going to be rain today." Echoleaf pulled back. "We should go collect some tansy before it starts raining."

Mintpaw bowed her head in agreement. "Shall I set out some wet herbs to dry too?"

Her mentor whisked her tail. "I'll do that. You get tansy." Echoleaf glanced into the clearing. "It looks like Flowerpaw is free right now. Take her with you. We'll need a lot, so extra paws will help."

Mintpaw felt her fur bush along her spine. From her last interaction, it seemed as though ginger she-cat was annoyed with her. *But we used to be super close. Maybe we just need to spend some more time together.* Bowing her head, the gray tabby trotted out of the den and towards the ginger apprentice.

"Hey, Flowerpaw!" Mintpaw chirped as she neared.

Flowerpaw, who was laying down in the clearing, full from having finished a meal, and was flicking her tail back and forth lazily,

glanced over at Mintpaw. "Oh, hello."

She didn't sound cold or annoyed, so Mintpaw padded forward, feeling a lot more confident. "We're low on tansy, and Echoleaf's asked me to pick some. We need to bring a lot, so we need extra paws. Want to come?"

"Sure." Flowerpaw pushed herself up. "I don't have anything to do, anyway." Without another word, she padded towards the entrance of the camp.

Mintpaw blinked after her. *She doesn't sound annoyed or mad at me, but we certainly weren't as close as we were before.* Shaking off the thought, the gray tabby hurried after the ginger she-cat, trying to keep up with her fast movements.

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"Is this enough?"

Mintpaw glanced up from the patch of tansy that she'd been nipping at to glance at Flowerpaw. The ginger apprentice's jaws were full of the herbs. The tabby plucked a couple more, as much as she could carry, before straightening and nodding. "Yeah. We can go back to camp now."

The trip, much to Mintpaw's dismay, was wordless between her and Flowerpaw. The ginger she-cat seemed to have no interest in speaking with Mintpaw anymore, for whenever the tabby tried making conversation, Flowerpaw's answers were always short or just one-worded. There hadn't been any of the reconnecting that Mintpaw had hoped for, which left her pelt buzzing with frustration. Right now, they were at the edge of their territory. Should they leave it, they'd be getting into the Twolegplace, and Mintpaw was careful to avoid that.

Flowerpaw nodded stiffly, and turned, about to pad away, when the bushes rustled, making both she-cats glance over. Mintpaw felt her pelt bush. This border wasn't one where they shared it with other Clans, so it couldn't be a Clan cat that was in the bushes. It had to be a kittypet, rogue, or, even worse, a Twoleg.

Flowerpaw dropped her herbs, opening her jaws, scenting the air. "Come out!" she demanded, her tail lashing. "You're on AirClan's territory."

Mintpaw held her breath as the bushes rustled again. Suddenly, a brown head poked out from the undergrowth. Soon after that, the rest of the cat made its way out. The cat was a brown she-cat with three white paws. She was a big, fluffy cat, one that you'd expect to find at a Twolegplace. Her eyes glowed a brown color as she blinked at the two Clan cats.

Flowerpaw tasted the air again. "She's a kittypet."

As Mintpaw nodded, the kittypet spoke. "Hi."

"Hello," Mintpaw replied, trying to keep the kittypet calm. "What are you doing on our territory?"

The kittypet cleared her throat. "Well, I was watching your Clan for a few days while I was at the Twolegplace..." Her voice trailed off, before she cleared her throat once more to continue. "After watching you guys, I thought your way of life was cool. I want to join!"

Flowerpaw's pelt fluffed. "But you're a kittypet!" she mewed. "I don't even know if you can handle a Clan life."

"I want to change," the brown she-cat meowed firmly. "I'll try."

Mintpaw glanced over at her companion. "It couldn't hurt to let the kittypet see Spottedstar, right?" After Flowerpaw blinked in agreement, the tabby blinked at the kittypet again. "What's your name?"

"Teddy."

"That's unusual." Flowerpaw wrinkled her nose. "Twolegs are weird."

Teddy ignored the red she-cat's comment on her name. "Are you two warriors?" Her eyes glowed with admiration as she blinked at them.

"No," Flowerpaw answered, "but I'm training to become one."

The brown she-cat faced Mintpaw. "Are you, too?"

The gray tabby shook her head. "No, I'm training to become a medicine cat."

The admiration faded from Teddy's eyes at those words. However, when she blinked at Flowerpaw, they lit up again.

Mintpaw cleared her throat. She couldn't help but feel awkward at that. "Well, let's bring Teddy to Spottedstar."

Teddy blinked in confusion at Mintpaw. "Why are you giving orders? Shouldn't the warrior be the one doing that?"

"A warrior isn't a higher rank than a medicine cat." Mintpaw fought to keep her voice calm. She glanced at Flowerpaw, hoping the ginger she-cat would back her up, but the apprentice's face was twisted with amusement.

Teddy didn't look like she believed Mintpaw's words, and turned towards Flowerpaw.

"Come on," Flowerpaw confirmed. "We should take you to meet Spottedstar. I'm Flowerpaw, by the way."

"And I'm Mintpaw," the gray tabby added as they padded into the forest.

Teddy barely glanced at Mintpaw, keeping her attention on the ginger she-cat. "Okay!"

For the rest of the way back, Teddy bombarded Flowerpaw with all sorts of questions about being a warrior. Mintpaw kept quiet, her jaws clamped around the tansy, her tail-tip twitching with frustration. Sure, there was nothing wrong with Teddy liking warriors better, but the brown she-cat was treating it as though warriors were *superior* to medicine cats, and Flowerpaw wasn't bothering to correct it. Mintpaw had tried, several times, but Teddy had ignored her, seemingly not believing anything a cat said if that cat was not a warrior.

By the time they reached camp, due to the finding of a kittypet, it was past sun-high. The sky was darkening, clouds heavy with rain. Mintpaw trudged in, tired. She'd probably collected less tansy than she normally would've if she'd gone alone.

Echoleaf hurried towards her. "Quick, put the tansy into the herb storage!" She blinked at the pile that the gray tabby collected. "Is that all you found?"

Mintpaw waved her tail wearily at Teddy, who was excitedly sniffing everything. "No, we also found a kittypet that wants to join the Clan."

Echoleaf's eyes widened as she blinked at the brown she-cat. Before she could say anything, Spottedstar's gaze had caught onto the newcomer, and was striding towards her.

"Flowerpaw, what is this?" the golden she-cat demanded as she padded near.

The ginger apprentice looked uneased under her leader's fierce stare. "This is Teddy," she meowed. "She's a kittypet, and she wants to join the Clan."

As Spottedstar's stare turned towards Teddy, it sent a shiver down Mintpaw's spine. The stare was so intense, full of fierceness of protecting her Clan, as though she thought that the kittypet could be a threat. However, Teddy didn't look bothered at all. She blinked up at Spottedstar with admiration in her gaze. "Are you a warrior?"

Spottedstar looked surprised at the question. "Yes, I *was* a warrior. Now, I am the leader of AirClan. What business do you have with us?"

Teddy's pelt fluffed with excitement. "Can I join the Clan?"

The fierceness in Spottedstar's gaze melted as she turned towards Thistlefur, beckoning to her deputy for his advice. The brown tom padded forward.

"I don't see why not," Thistlefur meowed. "It's great to have newcomers. Grassfeather's kits won't be kitted for a long time,

either, so it would be nice to get a new apprentice."

Spottedstar bowed her head in agreement. "Very well. Teddy, your new name is now Robinpaw." The brown kittypet looked happy with her new name, and gave a joyful fluff of her fur. "Your mentor-" The golden she-cat glanced around the camp "-is going to be Mistyfur."

The gray she-cat's eyes widened with surprise at how fast everything was moving. Nevertheless, she trotted forward, tapping her nose against Robinpaw's. Although the ceremony wasn't a normal one, Robinpaw was now an apprentice of AirClan.

Spottedstar waved her tail, dismissing the cats that had gathered around to watch. Mintpaw turned away, picking up the bundle of tansy once more to carry it inside the den. A new cat was here. A new cat who seemed to think warriors were better than medicine cats. The gray tabby shivered, shoving the tansy in the right place, wondering how Robinpaw would fit in with the Clan.

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Word Count // 1530

Edited

Hi! I know I haven't posted in a couple days, but here's a new chapter! There's a new character, too. This idea was made by dreamcloudofstarclan ! There was a gap between one exciting point and the next, and I didn't want it to all just be fillers. So, I asked for some ideas that I could work into the plot, and here was one! I think I actually like the plot better now, with this idea. So, thanks to dreamcloud for it! If you have an idea, as long as it doesn't change the plot too much, I'd be happy to add it in! Just comment it on the message board! The cat above is Teddy, or, Robinpaw. Pretend that her paws are white on the picture. Okay, that's all! Bye!

Chapter 12

[image]

The color of the sky was a dark, navy blue as the AirClan Gathering patrol trotted through the forest. Bright, white stars scattered against the deep blue, creating a breathtaking view. The full moon glowed with a beautiful shade of silver as it cast shimmery images onto the lake. Shadows flickered through the forest as the cats walked, a cheerful buzzing surrounding them.

Mintpaw was padding alone, like she normally did, gazing up at the sky. Her paws were itching to hurry, wanting to talk with Leafpaw, Cobrapaw, and Cloverpaw. She and her friends in AirClan seemed to drift apart, even with her own brother!

"Look!" Robinpaw's voice snapped Mintpaw out of her gazing. "I think I see the clearing!" Her voice was pitched with excitement.

The gray tabby's tail-tip twitched with annoyance, even though Robinpaw wasn't doing anything wrong. She wasn't a huge fan of the brown she-cat. She already hadn't been when Robinpaw announced warriors were above medicine cats, and she certainly wasn't now after living a whole moon with the new apprentice. Robinpaw treated Mintpaw as though the gray tabby was below her. She acted towards Echoleaf the same she would towards a warrior apprentice. That was barely any of the respect a medicine cat deserved. Echoleaf, in her turn, spoke to Robinpaw coldly, often hurrying up with her movements to try and move the brown she-cat out as quickly as possible. Perhaps that wasn't what a medicine cat was supposed to do, but Mintpaw couldn't help but feel satisfaction every time Echoleaf's voice was icy when she spoke to Robinpaw.

Another thing about Robinpaw that deeply annoyed Mintpaw was that the brown she-cat was completely obsessed with the codes. Of course, the codes are important and a huge part of their way of life, but Robinpaw repeated the Warrior Code every single day to herself, either muttering it under her breath or speaking loud enough for the entire Clan to hear. And it wasn't just the Warrior

Code. It was the Medicine Cat Code, too. She wasn't even a medicine cat! And, after learning the codes, Robinpaw seemed to deem herself at an even higher spot. Sometimes, she would watch Mintpaw closely, as though daring her to break a rule. Mintpaw's pelt always fluffed with annoyance. She deeply wanted to tell Robinpaw to leave her alone, and that she wasn't even a medicine cat! However, she knew that if she made any public outbursts, she would be considered the mean one. So, she used Echoleaf's strategy, avoiding Robinpaw as much as possible and keeping her voice cold when she spoke.

"Yes," Icepaw mewed, replying to Robinpaw's comment. "That is the clearing right up there! I can introduce you to a lot of new cats!"

"Are they warriors?" Robinpaw mewed as she hurried up. *Why does that even matter?*

Icepaw purred. "Duh, of course!"

Mintpaw blinked at Icepaw, feeling slightly betrayed at the tom's words. They had been kithood friends, after all.

As Robinpaw's eyes lit up with excitement, Spottedstar pushed her way into the clearing, leading them in. Mintpaw huffed a sigh as she followed the patrol. She wasn't going to worry over that. Icepaw can say whatever he wants, and she shouldn't feel bothered by his words.

The gray tabby brushed past Robinpaw and Icepaw coldly, heading towards Cobrapaw, Leafpaw, and Cloverpaw. Her true friends.

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"Who's the new cat?" Cobrapaw craned his head to try and get a better look at Robinpaw. The Gathering was finished, and the brown she-cat had already been introduced. Yet, it seemed that everyone was still buzzing about her. "What was her name again? Robinpaw?"

"Yeah," Leafpaw replied, sitting up as he tried looking at Robinpaw as well. "Did Spottedstar say she used to be a kittypet?"

Cloverpaw and Mintpaw exchanged a glance. Both she-cats blinked at the toms wearily, their tail-tips twitching.

The gray tabby nodded in response to Leafpaw's question. "Yes." She kept her answer brief, feeling the fur rise along her spine slightly. Although it may seem petty of her, she felt upset that Robinpaw was even a topic in their conversation. "Can we not talk about her?"

Cobrapaw turned back towards the group. "Sorry. What's wrong?"

"Yeah," Leafpaw added, retreating to his old position. "Are you and Robinpaw feuding or something?"

Mintpaw shrugged. "When me and Flowerpaw found her at the borders, she seemed to think that warriors are above medicine cats. And she still thinks so."

Cloverpaw brushed her tail against Mintpaw's spine, smoothing the fur. "We'll see what she thinks when she's injured."

"Well, I tell you all the time that warriors are better," Leafpaw mewed teasingly.

"Yeah, but you do it jokingly," Mintpaw replied. "Robinpaw actually believes it. Even Echoleaf doesn't like her."

Cobrapaw's whiskers twitched. "Well, if Echoleaf doesn't like her, then she must be really bad," he joked, although there was some truth to his words. Echoleaf was kind to every single cat she met. Mintpaw had never seen her dislike someone until Robinpaw.

Suddenly, Robinpaw's scent drifted heavily in Mintpaw's jaws. The gray tabby glanced in that direction, her fur bushed reproachfully, only to see the brown she-cat weaving through the crowd. Her heart sank when she realized where Robinpaw was heading. She was coming towards here!

Mintpaw felt guilt prick her fur as she realized her thoughts, and how unwelcoming she was acting towards the brown she-cat. However, she couldn't help but want nothing but to have Robinpaw go far, far away.

The four cats were silent as they watched Robinpaw trot near.

"Hi!" the brown she-cat meowed, padding over. Her eyes swerved away from Cloverpaw and Mintpaw swiftly, turning her attention towards Cobrapaw and Leafpaw. "I'm Robinpaw! I just joined AirClan, and I'm just going around, meeting the other apprentices."

Cloverpaw whisked her tail, bringing the brown she-cat's attention towards her. "Well, hello, I'm Cloverpaw."

Robinpaw swept her gaze on Cloverpaw for a moment, before nodding, giving her one of those, *'Oh, you're a medicine cat'* looks. She turned back towards the toms, blinking at them expectantly.

Cobrapaw, who had a naturally cold front unless you got to know him, plus his loyalty to his friends, nodded coldly to Robinpaw in reply, as though to say*'If you're rude to my friends I'm rude to you'*. However, Leafpaw was just about the opposite. Although he was still loyal to his friends as well, his personality was always bubbly and cheerful, welcoming to everybody.

"Hello!" Leafpaw chirped, twitching his tail warmly. "It's great to meet you!"

Robinpaw's brown eyes glimmered cheerfully as Mintpaw felt as though something had jabbed her stomach. She basically had to wait a moon to see her friends, and now Robinpaw was ruining it! She knew that she was being unreasonable, and that Robinpaw was just trying to make new friends, but she couldn't help it. Plus, why did the brown she-cat have to attempt friendship with *her* friends?

Robinpaw and Leafpaw joked and talked for the rest of the night. Mintpaw's attention drifted off, staring up at the sky once more. Cloverpaw's, too, moved away. Halfway through, she stood up and padded towards the medicine cats, joining them. Mintpaw's paws itched to go with her - it didn't look like Leafpaw needed her, anyway. However, Cobrapaw was still sitting there, and she didn't want to leave him.

Mintpaw stood up, beckoning to Cobrapaw. Muttering quickly to Leafpaw that they were going to go talk somewhere else, she led the

tom away.

"Robinpaw sure can talk!" Cobrapaw meowed as they left. "She's been chattering basically all night. Who knew one cat could have so many different stories about catching butterflies."

Mintpaw whisked her tail in agreement. "Plus Leafpaw's friendly personality, they could probably talk for the entire night, nonstop," she joked, earning a purr from her friend.

The two fell into a peaceful silence, sitting next to each other, staring up at the silvery moon, the chattering of the other cats surrounding them.

"The moon is so beautiful," Cobrapaw marveled, as Mintpaw nodded. For a second, she felt tempted to tell him about her dream. She hadn't had that dream for a long time, already, which was good. It was as though she was somehow fixing the future. However, it couldn't hurt to tell him, could it? He should know what he's going to do.

No, you mouse-brain, she scolded herself. *What if he turns evil because he thinks that you made up the dream and has no faith in him? Besides, StarClan trusted the dream to you, and you only! What kind of medicine cat would you be if you told him*? As her mind drifted to Robinpaw, and the brown she-cat's obsession with the codes, a shiver ran down her spine. *The code also says that medicine cats aren't allowed to tell their dreams to cats of other Clans that aren't medicine cats.*

After she made a comment in reply, the two fell into peaceful silence once more, enjoying each others' presence. As Mintpaw touched her tail-tip to Cobrapaw's, she suddenly wished that she and the tom were in the same Clan. It would be great if Leafpaw and Cloverpaw were with her, too. A lonely feeling washed over her as she blinked up at the vast sky, Spottedstar's yowl to gather the AirClan patrol ringing through her ears.

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Word Count // 1556

Edited

Hi! Here's another chapter! I hope you liked it! So, why do you think that Mintpaw felt upset about Robinpaw talking with Leafpaw? I'd love to hear your guesses! Okay, I shall go work on the next chapter now. Goodbye, and have an awesome day, night, noon, dawn, whatever time you're reading this!

Chapter 13

[image]

The silver half-moon was shining brightly in the night sky as Echoleaf and Mintpaw made their way through the forest towards the Moonpool. The gray tabby's paws were itching to go faster. She wanted to go find Cloverpaw. Robinpaw, Flowerpaw, and Icepaw didn't seem to want to talk with her very much. She was fine with not speaking to Robinpaw, but Icepaw and Flowerpaw's attitudes did hurt her a little, especially when they took the brown she-cat's side over hers. Adderpaw seemed to not want to get involved, always scuttering to the side, but he dropped by the medicine den every once in a while to talk with Mintpaw. Other than that, the two littermates didn't have many conversations, as though Adderpaw didn't want to be seen with Mintpaw.

Echoleaf pushed through the leaves, padding down the worn-out path towards the silvery pool. Raincloud and Cloverpaw, the medicine cats of EarthClan, were already there, crouched around the pool. The brown-and-white she-cat blinked up eagerly in greeting as Mintpaw approached, and she felt a warm feeling fluttering in her as she crouched down next to her friend, exchanging greetings. Ravenleaf, WaterClan's medicine cat, trotted over to Echoleaf as Nightpool, the medicine cat of FireClan, acknowledged the AirClan medicine cat with a twitch of his tail and a warm blink.

"So," Echoleaf mewed as she stepped towards the pool, "shall we get started? Sorry that me and Mintpaw were late. Robinpaw had a thorn stuck in her paws."

At those words, Cloverpaw leaned towards Mintpaw. "Does Robinpaw respect medicine cats now?"

Mintpaw scoffed. "No. She thinks that medicine cats should serve warriors, that it's their duty." Sure, it is, but a little appreciation is welcomed, too.

As Cloverpaw rolled her eyes, Raincloud suddenly bent towards the Moonpool, followed by the rest of the medicine cats. Mintpaw's pelt pricked with surprise, realizing that they were about to share tongues with StarClan. Heat burned on her pelt as she leaned forward hurriedly, Cloverpaw by her side, hoping that none of the medicine cats saw them not paying attention.

She watched as Raincloud and Cloverpaw slumped down, pulled into their dreams. Beside her, Echoleaf, Nightpool, and Ravenleaf did the same. Mintpaw's pelt pricked. *I haven't had those terrible dreams of Cobrapaw killing Leafpaw in a moon... perhaps StarClan won't show me that dream again.* Taking a deep breath, she plunged down into the waters.

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As Mintpaw opened her eyes, stepping into the dream, dread washed over her. The infamous mist wrapped around her, making her tail-tip twitch. She couldn't help but feel annoyed. Ever since Robinpaw had arrived, she seemed to get agitated easier and easier.

"I already know what's going to happen!" She threw her muzzle forward into the mist. "Why won't you just give me a normal vision, or just share tongues with me? Why do you keep giving me the same vision? I can't do anything about it!" She wanted to raise her voice even more, but she struggled to keep it calm.

The wind roared, as though responding to her words, forcing the mist to swirl around her harder. She wrapped her tail around her paws, ducking her head, as the fierce gusts blasted her pelt, trying to keep herself safe from the thundering wind. Suddenly, the gust stilled.

"So, you want to have a normal vision, huh?"

Mintpaw blinked up at the voice, her pelt fluffed with surprise. A white tom with blue eyes stood in front of her, blinking expectantly. Stars glittered in his fur. The gray tabby's ears pricked. *A StarClan cat!*

"I'm sorry," she mewed quickly, stumbling over her words. "I didn't

mean to offend you or StarClan. I was just frustrated and I shouldn't have done that-"

"It's fine," the white tom interrupted, his voice kind. "I understand that you're frustrated." His tone was soft and gentle, and when he spoke, he eyed her cautiously, as though she was something dangerous that could explode. "I've been going through the same thing as you. We haven't been able to see anything other than what we've shown you."

Mintpaw's eyes widened, her pelt burning with shame. *It's not like StarClan didn't want to tell you what to do! It's that they didn't know what to tell you!* "I'm sorry," she mewed again.

The white tom waved his tail. "It's no problem, Mintpaw. My name's Cloudpool, by the way. I was the AirClan medicine cat before Echoleaf."

The gray tabby's pelt fluffed with surprise. "So you were Echoleaf's mentor?" Her respect for Cloudpool was only growing.

The medicine cat bowed his head. "Yes." He flicked his tail. "Let's move on from that. We've seen something else, and we wanted to share it with you." He began padding into the mist. Mintpaw hurried to follow.

As she pushed through the wall of mist, she entered a forest. However, it wasn't the AirClan forest that she was used to. Her pelt fluffed at the unfamiliar landscape, her nose twitching at the weird scent.

Suddenly, a cat's voice cut through the air. "You're back!"

Mintpaw angled her ears towards the voice, which she recognized as a she-cat's. Soon enough, a gray she-cat slid out of the bushes, and the apprentice's pelt fluffed uneasily. The gray she-cat looked almost exactly like her! She blinked at Cloudpool, wondering if it was her future self. The tom, as though reading her mind, shook his head.

The more Mintpaw studied the she-cat, the more unnerved she

became. The gray she-cat had the same color pelt she did, with the same stripes. The stripes were simply running in different directions. Her fur was shorter than Mintpaw's, sticking to her pelt. However, that was about the only differences there were. Her eyes glowed with the same shade of green as the gray tabby's.

Mintpaw pricked twitched her tail. *Could she be the cat that had dragged Leafpaw's body in my dream?* However, there were still some differences between the two cats. This one's voice was a lot gentler and kinder, and her eyes glowed warmly instead of with evil.

"Did you catch enough prey?" The she-cat's voice snapped Mintpaw out of her thoughts as she spoke to someone who was standing behind the bushes, out of view from the two viewing medicine cats.

"That's all we need to see here," Cloudpool murmured softly to Mintpaw as he touched his tail-tip to her shoulder, leading her away.

"But-" Mintpaw's protest was cut off by the mist, which swirled, erasing the image, making her stomach twist with frustration. The one time she wanted to see more, she couldn't. Suddenly, a thought flashed into her mind. "Is that Mamba?"

Cloudpool's ears twitched. "Who's Mamba?"

Mintpaw recalled her dreams. There was this one where Leafpaw had run to Cobrapaw, demanding for his kits, saying that Mamba said he had them. "I don't know. They didn't seem like a nice cat, though."

Cloudpool's eyes flashed with realization. "Ah, yes, I think I know who you're talking about." He frowned. "I don't know, though. None of the dreams revealed any names."

Suddenly, Echoleaf's voice, sounding muffled, filled the air.

"This is going to end soon," Cloudpool meowed, glancing upwards. "Just be careful. All of these visions are going to connect somehow."

"But I still have questions-" Mintpaw's sentence was broken off as

she snapped out of the dream.

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Mintpaw blinked, shaking the water drops from her whiskers. The medicine cats were chatting off to one side. Nightpool and Ravenleaf had already begun climbing the steps up while Echoleaf and Raincloud talked at the bottom. Cloverpaw nudged Mintpaw gently.

"You okay?" The brown-and-white she-cat blinked at her. "You seem worried."

Mintpaw shook her head. "No, I'm fine." She pushed herself up to her paws as Echoleaf and Rainpool, now that their apprentices had gone up, began padding up the steps.

"Leafpaw wanted me to tell you that he's sorry." Cloverpaw fell beside Mintpaw, brushing her pelt as they followed their mentors.

The tabby's ears pricked with surprise. "What for?"

"He thought that you were mad at him because he was talking with Robinpaw," Cloverpaw answered. "He thought that he ruined our evening."

Mintpaw felt a burst of affection for her friend. *He's so sweet.* She purred. "No, tell him that he didn't," she mewed. "Of course, I wasn't happy about it, but he didn't make me mad. Tell him not to worry about it."

Cloverpaw ducked her head in agreement as she went on a rant about Robinpaw. Mintpaw was only half-listening. Her mind was mainly on the vision. *They're all supposed to connect, somehow.* She shook out her pelt, blinking up at the sky. *Hopefully StarClan's going to send me another vision soon.* After moons of wishing that her dreams would go away, she wanted them only to return. She felt as though she were close to solving the mystery.

But, little did she know, tonight was the last time that StarClan would send her any dreams.

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Word Count // 1495

Not Edited

Hi! I know that this vision is a lot more boring than the others, but it's sort of important. I guess that I probably wouldn't have needed it, though. Anyway, any predictions on what's going to happen next? About the last sentence of StarClan not sending Mintpaw any more dreams, I don't know if I'm going to go through with that. I haven't planned out the book perfectly yet, but I think that StarClan wouldn't need to give Mintpaw any more visions. And yes, somehow, all these visions except one, are all going to connect together! Thanks so much for the support on the book! Bye!

Chapter 14

[image]

It was around sun-high when Mintpaw left the camp to collect herbs. Most of her Clanmates were in camp, resting and eating prey, before their afternoon patrols. It was the most peaceful time - that, or dawn and nighttime.

But, both dawn and nighttime were a little too early and late for Mintpaw to be out, so she always tried to take a walk at sun-high. It was a good and easy thing to do for her to clear her mind. It was something she was now trying to do, to get in a habit of. It was nice and calm. A peaceful time to think of her dreams and real life. At that thought, her paws curled with annoyance. Although she felt pleased that StarClan trusted her, she couldn't help but feel it's unfair. *I'm only 10 moons! I'm not nearly as experienced as Echoleaf might be! Why put this pressure on me?*

As she bounced through the woods, feeling the greenleaf breeze ruffle her fur, she couldn't help but yet again think of Robinpaw, and how annoying the brown she-cat had been. It was only two days after the half-moon meeting, yet Robinpaw had managed to annoy Mintpaw already! The brown she-cat had come into the medicine den, asking for herbs, then casually slid in the comment that medicine cats should be the ones changing out the dens because warriors needed to help protect the camp. That comment had made Mintpaw's pelt bush up as though a thousand bees had stung her. Unfortunately, Echoleaf wasn't there, or Mintpaw was sure that her mentor would've snapped some comment that would've made the brown she-cat shut up instantly.

Mintpaw was suddenly snapped out of her thoughts as she passed an oak tree that looked much too familiar. She was at the EarthClan borders. Again. Her pelt itched. *Why do I always go here when I'm not paying attention?* Every other time, she had no idea, but today, she had a guess. Ever since Cloverpaw had informed her of Leafpaw's apology, she'd wanted to see the tom again, and hang out. It seemed

much too long to wait a half moon. Once again, she found herself wishing that she and her friends were in the same Clan. There was a bigger chance that she would get lost inside AirClan's territory than to have her and Leafpaw meet up at exactly the same time, especially when it was resting time for most cats.

Suddenly, the EarthClan borders rustled, and Mintpaw pricked her ears eagerly. *Leafpaw?* However, it was Raincloud's head that poked out, carrying a bundle of marigold. The gray tabby couldn't help the lump of disappointment that settled on her pelt. She didn't know *why* she felt like this. In past moons, of course, she had desperately wanted to see her friends, but it was nothing compared to now. And it didn't have to be Leafpaw that came - she would've been perfectly happy if it was Cloverpaw whose head had poked out instead of Raincloud's.

You're being selfish, she scolded herself. *There's no way your friends can just drop all their duties and come talk! Stop acting like a kit, and make some friends in your own Clan!*

However, as the last thought passed through her mind, she sighed. Her old friends were already so disconnected with her, and to try and get close again... Well, it was near to impossible now that Robinpaw was here.

"Mintpaw?" Raincloud's voice made the gray tabby glance over the border. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to collect, er-" Mintpaw's gaze swept around her surroundings quickly "-yarrow."

Suddenly, a familiar voice popped out from behind Raincloud. "Mintpaw's here?"

The gray tabby's pelt fluffed with joy as she saw Leafpaw's head poke out after Raincloud's. He, too, was carrying a jawful of herbs, and looked a little disgusted over it.

Raincloud stepped out of the bushes as Mintpaw waved a cheerful greeting towards her friend. "You wait here, Leafpaw. I'll go collect some more. Make sure these don't get blown away." He set down his

bundle, waved a quick farewell to the tabby, and disappeared back into the woods.

Leafpaw wrinkled his nose as he leaned down, grabbing all the herbs into his jaws, and carried them over to where Mintpaw stood, dropping them with a twisted look on his face. "Blech! Those are disgusting!"

The gray tabby let out a purr of amusement at her friend's actions. "I thought you were a brave warrior that could face any badger. Yet you fail at carrying herbs," she teased.

Leafpaw pretended to be upset. "Hey! Those are two very different things!"

"Ah, yes," Mintpaw agreed, turning her voice serious. "Carrying leaves are much more dangerous than fighting off a badger."

Leafpaw's whiskers twitched with amusement as he rolled his eyes good-humoredly. "Yeah, yeah," he mewed, purring. "So, how did the half-moon meeting go? Cloverpaw wouldn't tell me anything."

The gray tabby slapped his shoulder with her tail affectionately. "It's a secret, mouse-brain!" she mewed, her voice warm. "It's a medicine cat thing." She pretended to be fancy, and that Leafpaw was a peasant, using a royal-like voice. "You warriors wouldn't understand."

Leafpaw let out a noise of protest. "Oh, yeah? Well- that's just not fair! You get to go to our Gatherings!"

Mintpaw purred. "It's my Gathering, too. I just get two!"

"Yeah, that's unfair," Leafpaw mewed. "You also get to go to every single one!"

"Unless I do something wrong. Besides, you get your full warrior name before me," Mintpaw replied.

Leafpaw's eyes lit up at that thought. "Oh, yeah! I'll be a full warrior and you'll just be an apprentice!" His face was smug, as though he knew it was his turn to tease now. "If we were in the same Clan, I

could order you to clean the elder's den."

"I would never do it." Mintpaw used her royal voice again. "After all, you *are* just a warrior." She felt slightly bad about doing that; it was what Robinpaw always seemed to do. However, Leafpaw didn't seem to be mad. His eyes were glimmering with amusement.

"That's not fair! It was my turn to tease you!" Leafpaw protested. He opened his jaws, about to say something else, before he hesitated, snapping them back together again.

Mintpaw tilted her head. "What?"

Leafpaw glanced around the clearing, his eyes nervous. He swallowed, hard. "Um..."

"Oh, just spit it out like you dropped those herbs," the gray tabby joked, flicking his ears with her tail-tip.

Leafpaw looked a little better after that, managing a purr. Mintpaw had no idea what had gotten into him. One moment he was fine, and the next he wasn't. "Well, do you want to meet up at the borders some other time again?"

Surprise flew through the gray tabby. She hadn't been expecting him to say that. Shock grabbed hold of her. "What?"

At her answer, Leafpaw rambled on. "Well, it could be at dawn, or at this time again. You know, we just meet up, and talk. I mean, you're my friend and all, and it doesn't seem very great to just see each other only once a moon. I just think that it would be better to hang out more often. The best time would be at dawn or at night, but I guess if you prefer sun-high, that's fine, too, I mean, that is, if you want to do this, but I understand if-"

Mintpaw cut him off with an amused purr. "Why are you so nervous? Of course I want to do it!" Her paws tingled with excitement. She was going to get to see her friend more often!

Leafpaw's nervous expression melted into a relieved one. "Oh, okay, great."

"Should we invite Cloverpaw, too?" Mintpaw wondered. "She might want to come." *Is it just my imagination, or did Leafpaw's eyes just flash?*

"I don't think so," the brown tom replied. "She prefers sticking to the rules."

"Well, technically, we're not breaking any rules," Mintpaw offered.

She received a shrug in response from Leafpaw. "I guess. Still, she's pretty busy with her medicine cat stuff. Raincloud's having her collect herbs all the time. In fact, she was busy with another patch of herbs so Raincloud brought me."

Mintpaw nodded in understanding. "What about Cobrapaw, then?"

Leafpaw angled his ears. "What about him?"

"Well, isn't he our friend, too?" The gray tabby tilted her head. "Shouldn't we invite him?"

Her friend blinked at her as though she'd grown two heads. "He's in a different Clan, and you don't even share a border with him," Leafpaw mewed, his whiskers twitching with amusement at her words. "How's he supposed to come?"

Mintpaw felt her belly squirm with embarrassment. "Yeah, I guess that's flawed thinking," she joked. There was a way for them to meet with Cobrapaw - if she crossed over into EarthClan's territory - but it was way too complicated.

"Leafpaw!" Raincloud's voice echoed through the woods.

Leafpaw glanced over his shoulder. "Mouse-dung, Raincloud's here! Meet at the borders, at dawn?"

"Sure," Mintpaw chirped.

The brown tom snatched up the herbs, in which his face twisted, once again, into disgust, which earned another purr from the gray tabby, as he bounded towards the medicine cat's voice. With a swish of his tail, he had disappeared into the bushes, leaving

Mintpaw staring at the spot where he'd left.

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Word Count // 1570

Edited

Hi! Sorry for not posting for a couple of days (I've been busy with school). So, any thoughts on this chapter? Leafpaw's acting really... odd. That's really all I had to say, so I'll keep this author's note short. Oh, and the cat at the top is Icepaw. He had nothing to do with this chapter, but I found a picture that I thought suited him, and I needed a picture for this thing anyway, so why not? Also a new Name that Apprentice chapter is also up (it's on Icepaw XD). Right, well, have a great day! Bye!

P.S. Okay, sorry, this author's note was not short.

Chapter 15

[image]

The sky was dark as Mintpaw uncurled herself slowly from her nest, going out to meet Leafpaw. She squinted, trying to see in the medicine den. There was barely to no light. In the dark, she could see Echoleaf sprawled out in her nest, her belly rising and falling softly, her tail-tip twitching. She looked relaxed, calm. As the tabby's eyes slowly adjusted to the dark, she glanced over at the herb storage, taking notice that they were low on dock leaves. She stepped out of her nest, hurrying towards the entrance.

Mintpaw kept her paw steps quiet as she slipped out of the medicine den. It was early. Before dawn, even. However, with one glance at the sky, the tabby could tell that it would be light soon. That didn't give her and Leafpaw much time to hang out, but they would take what they could get. Sparing a quick look at the entrance of the camp, she saw Eagleflight. The warrior's green eyes were bright and alert.

She must've just arrived. Mintpaw's tail-tip twitched. *It's going to be harder to sneak past her if she's well-rested. I need to get out earlier, before the third cat takes their turn guarding.* Briefly, she debated over going out through the dirt-tunnel, before throwing that idea out. *I'll just tell her I'm collecting herbs. That way, she can tell Echoleaf, if she wonders where I am.* Happy with the idea, the tabby trotted forward.

Eagleflight caught sight of Mintpaw as she neared. "Good morning!"

"Good morning," Mintpaw chirped back.

"Where are you headed?" Eagleflight's tail-tip twitched. The tabby could tell there was no suspicion, but there was a lot of curiosity.

"I'm just collecting herbs," Mintpaw answered. The answer seemed to satisfy Eagleflight, and she dripped her head, indicating for the tabby to leave. Mintpaw hurried out into the forest, feeling a little

bundle of satisfaction that her plan had worked. She picked up her pace to a run, bounding through the forest, weaving through the trees with ease, going on a path that she knew perfectly.

Soon, she'd arrived at the border. Leafpaw was already there, glancing into AirClan's territory, waiting for her. His eyes lit up happy as she arrived, swishing his tail. "Good morning!"

"Morning!" Mintpaw bounced into EarthClan's territory. A good thing of being a medicine cat. Nobody would get suspicious. But, to be fair, they weren't breaking any rules, anyway. "How are you?"

"I'm fine." Leafpaw fluffed his pelt. "Cloverpaw was already awake, though. She asked me where I was going. I told her I was just going out for a quick walk before patrols."

Mintpaw felt a guilt twisting in her stomach. "Are you *sure* she wouldn't want to come?" They weren't breaking any rules! There would be no reason for Cloverpaw not to, unless she were busy. But it would be good to ask, anyway.

"Yes." Leafpaw's answer was short. "She likes focusing a lot on her training." He shook out his pelt, changing the subject. "Come on; let's go explore!"

"Explore?" Mintpaw hurried after him, purring. "This is your territory! Shouldn't you know it?"

"Well I'm showing it to you, mouse-brain, so it's like exploring," Leafpaw teased, "except I'm the one with all the knowledge."

Mintpaw rolled her eyes affectionately, hurrying after the tom, falling in besides him as he led her around. She was careful to stay near the AirClan border, though, and not go too deeply into EarthClan's land. Leafpaw seemed to have the same idea, because he led her a little bit into the trees, stopping there, not going any futher.

A giant, tall oak tree stood in front of her. Mintpaw craned her head, blinking up at it. "That's tall."

Leafpaw nodded. "It's the Great Oak. We use it to practice climbing.

There's also a bunch of prey. There's always birds perched up there and mice by the roots. It's also like a landmark, too."

Mintpaw nodded. She could near the sound of birds tweeting high up in the branches and mice's paws scuttering in the undergrowth. "That's cool."

Leafpaw bowed his head. Suddenly, he blinked at her with a mischievous glint in his eyes. "Tag! You're it!" He touched his tail-tip swiftly onto her pelt before racing away, alongside the border.

The tabby stood, startled for a moment, before shaking her head fondly, a smile spreading on her features. *He's so immature.* However, she couldn't help but feel her paws tug her, wanting to play. Mintpaw bounded after him, her tail streaming out behind her as she ran, eating up the distance. "You'd better hurry up, Leafpaw! I'm right behind you!"

Leafpaw glanced over his shoulder, his eyes widening as a surprised squawk left him. "What? How?" He turned around, focusing on moving his paws faster.

Mintpaw purred, churning after him, her paws kicking up dust behind her as she ran. She had to put more attention on where she was going, since this was unfamiliar territory, and weaved around the trees as best as she could.

The morning wind blew through her fur, making her stomach flip with joy. Her tail was streaming out behind her as her paws hit the ground, moving her along. The early sunlight shone down on the two apprentices, lighting up their pelts, the light slowly seeping into the forest.

Leafpaw's tail was practically right in front of Mintpaw's nose. *Just a little faster...* She urged herself, trying to move quicker. Her paws sped up, until everything around her was just a blur. All she could see was Leafpaw's brown pelt. The forest melted away around her. *Almost there... Got him!*

Triumph filled the gray tabby as she jumped, bowling her friend over. The two apprentices tumbled over onto the ground, panting

and resting. Mintpaw glanced around. There was no EarthClan or AirClan scent in the air. In fact, there was only a hint of Clan scent, coming from where they'd ran. They'd left the Clan territories!

As she turned to tell Leafpaw, the brown tom flicked his ears, hinting that he already knew. However, there was no urge to return in his eyes as he pushed himself to his paws. "Let's explore!"

"Explore?" Mintpaw hurried after him, amusement glittering inside her. She wanted to explore, it would be fun, but they had duties to return to. "But the Clan is going to be awake soon." They couldn't stay out here forever.

Leafpaw shook out his pelt. "Just for a little while. I'll catch something, so my Clan won't get suspicious."

Mintpaw bowed her head, reminding herself that she had to grab some dock leaves before she returned. "Okay."

Her friend trotted into the new forest, and she hurried to follow him. As she entered, a cold feeling washed over her. The trees seemed familiar, yet she'd never seen them before. A feeling that something bad was going to happen tingled on her spine, making her want to leave instantly. *Where have I seen this forest before?*

Suddenly, it hit her. It was in the dream, with Cloudpool! The gray tabby, just like her! Mintpaw halted in her tracks. She was finding more and more of her dreams! *But what will that gray cat do? What's her name? I don't even know if she's good or bad!* Frustration filled her as she debated whether to call Leafpaw to leave or not.

Leafpaw glanced back at her, worry glimmering in his eyes. "You okay?"

Mintpaw took a deep breath. *As you said, you don't even know if she's good or bad. She seemed very kind in the dream. You'll be fine, Mintpaw.* The tabby nodded. "Yeah. Sorry." She picked her pace up to a trot, hurrying towards her friend. However, she still wanted terribly to leave the forest. "Can we go, though?" She didn't want Leafpaw to know about the main reason - the dream. "We should get back to Clan territory."

Leafpaw glanced wistfully into the forest, before nodding. "Yeah, we should." He shook out his pelt again, padding towards her. "Come on, let's go. We'll explore another day."

Mintpaw nodded, relief filling her as she followed Leafpaw out of the forest. However, as the two of them exited, the gray tabby felt as though a pair of eyes were following them, stuck on her pelt. Someone had been watching them.

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Word Count // 1380

Not Edited

Hi! I haven't posted in a couple of days. Sorry! But here's another chapter! I hope you liked it. Any thoughts or ideas? Who do you think might be watching them? I know that most of the chapter was basically a filler.

Chapter 16

[image]

It was a chilly night, very surprising for greenleaf. The silver moon was shining brightly against the dark blue sky, its light splashing down into the forest, lighting the cats' paths. A gentle breeze whistled through the trees, ruffling the cats' pelts and sending a small shiver down their spines.

Mintpaw padded after her patrol, eager to go to the Gathering. Although she and Leafpaw had been meeting every morning, she hadn't seen Cloverpaw since the last half-moon meeting and Cobrapaw in a moon! As she bounded into the Gathering, her eyes glanced sideways, towards the FireClan patrol. She spotted Cobrapaw's pelt amongst his Clanmates, and beckoned cheerfully at him. As the AirClan patrol began spreading out, Cobrapaw was on his paws and weaving through the crowd towards her.

"Hi!" Mintpaw chirped as he neared.

"Hello," Cobrapaw purred in reply, swishing his tail. "Do you see Leafpaw or Cloverpaw?"

Mintpaw scanned the crowd. "Cloverpaw's right there." She nodded to where the medicine cats sat. "But I don't see Leafpaw." She saw Cobrapaw's eyes flash with an emotion before disappearing. The exchange had been too fast for her to fully catch sight of, but she thought she'd seen... relief? Maybe it was sadness, and he was sad that Leafpaw wasn't able to attend the Gathering.

Cobrapaw ducked his head. "Should we head over to Cloverpaw, then?"

Mintpaw glanced over towards her friend. The brown-and-white she-cat seemed to be listening to Nightstrike and Rainpool's conversation, absorbed in the learning. *Leafpaw's right; she is really focused on her studies.*

"She looks busy," Mintpaw mewed. "It would be best not to distract her. Let's just go find a spot and sit down."

Cobrapaw nodded. The two apprentices weaved through the crowd, talking and chattering as they went. The clearing was crowded. Apprentices were having competitions, such as who could jump the highest. Mintpaw spotted Amberpaw leaping into the air before twisting gracefully, landing on her paws, definitely securing the win. Leaders and deputies were talking at the roots of the tree, murmuring softly with one another to make sure their conversation wasn't being overheard. They didn't seem to be discussing Clan things - they all looked calm and happy, talking as though they were friends instead of leaders of opposing Clans. Elders were sprawled out towards the back, sharing tongues and telling stories.

Mintpaw found a somewhat empty spot near the corner. She beckoned to Cobrapaw, leading him towards it. The two sat down just in time to hear Moonstar's yowl. "The Gathering is starting!" Instantly, a hush fell over the clearing.

The leaders climbed up the tree. Moonstar started first, announcing that all was well and that there was a new apprentice, Snowpaw. Spottedstar stepped up next, with no announcements other than that Grassfeather was carrying kits. Tigerstar reported that they had a new warrior, Pineclaw. Finally, it was Sunstar, WaterClan's leader, to give his report. The blazing orange tom stepped up to the branch.

"All is fine in WaterClan as well," he meowed. "Like the others, prey is running well. The lake and streams are full of fish. Lilyfur's given birth to three new kits: Dapplekit, Clearkit, and Snakekit. We also have a new apprentice, Rainpaw."

As Rainpaw's name rang into the clearing, Mintpaw raised her head hurriedly to cheer along, catching sight of the gray tom. He dipped his head, giving his chest fur a couple of embarrassed licks.

Once the cheering had died down, Sunstar's eyes flashed with hesitation before seemingly deciding his mind. "There have also been rogue scents near the borders."

Mintpaw and Cobrapaw exchanged a worried glance. There had

been no challenges to the Clans' borders in moons!

Spottedstar's pelt bristled at his words. "Rogues?" It was clear that the AirClan leader was uneasy, too.

The orange tom nodded. "It's too close for our liking. We found a tuft of their fur stuck onto a bush right on the border!"

Tigerstar blinked, concern showing through his gaze. "Have they tried crossing?"

"Not yet," Sunstar meowed. "I thought I should tell you in case they move away from our territory."

"What do they look like?" Moonstar's blue eyes were wide. "Have you seen them yet?"

Sunstar's eyes narrowed with thought. "I personally haven't, but Riverheart has." He glanced at his deputy.

Riverheart cleared his throat. "I saw one while I was out on patrol," he meowed. "It was a sleek black she-cat. Her entire pelt was a silky black, like nighttime with no light." He frowned. "I imagine it's what everything would look like without the sun. Her eyes, too- they were terrible." He shuffled his paws. "When her gaze met mine, her eyes were cold. They were green, but there was barely any light in them. And the way she walked- well, I shouldn't say walk. She *strutted*. She moved as though she knew that she could destroy you if she wanted to. Not a force to be reckoned with."

Gasps of horror rose up into the clearing.

Mintpaw ducked her head. "She sounds terrifying!"

Cobrapaw nodded, his gaze worried. "If that's just one cat... imagine what it would be like with an entire group of them."

Anxious whispers were bouncing off the trees. Cats were glancing at the cat besides them, discussing the black cat, their pelts spiked. Spottedstar's golden fur was bristled along her spine, staring out into the trees, as though the cat were going to appear right then and there. Moonstar's blue eyes were widened, and she kept

glancing away, too, towards the direction of EarthClan's camp, as though wondering if everyone was okay. Tigerstar kept shuffling his paws with unease. However, other than that, he seemed to keep himself together well.

Sunstar scowled, shooting an annoyed look at his deputy, as if to say: *You were supposed to comfort them, just to tell them what the cat looks like so they weren't as worried! You weren't supposed to make them more anxious.* He cleared his throat. "Calm down everyone, I'm sure it'll be fine. Thank you for the... descriptive words, Riverheart. I'm sure everyone will know who she is should they see her." When his words seemed to do nothing to calm the panicking cats, he added, "There are warriors for a reason! Our warriors have gone through amazing training. Should any cat challenge us, we'll be fine."

Mintpaw calmed. That was true. What could a cat do against a Clan?

Although Sunstar's words calmed the cats below, the leaders still seemed anxious to get back to camp. There would be no sharing tongues after the Gathering.

"We should get going now." Moonstar was the first to push herself to her paws, her tail-tip twitching. "I'm going to go check on the camp. We should all see if we have any rogue scents, and report those at the next Gathering." When all the leaders nodded in agreement, the white she-cat leaped down from the tree, waving her tail to EarthClan's patrol. Mintpaw managed a quick flick of her tail in farewell before Cloverpaw was led away.

"We're going to go, too," Spottedstar meowed, standing up and descending the tree.

Tigerstar followed her. "Yeah. Us, too. Send patrols for help if you need it if the rogues attack."

Sunstar leaped down after them, seemingly annoyed at the outcome of the Gathering, and how it was ending so quickly. However, he acknowledged Tigerstar's offer with a bow of his head and, "Thank you, but I'm sure we'll be fine."

Spottedstar ignored the two toms' conversation, beckoning quickly to the AirClan patrol. "Come along!"

Mintpaw stood up hurriedly. "Bye, Cobrapaw!"

"Bye!" the tom mewed, standing up as well. He leaned down, touching his nose gently to her ears. "Hopefully I'll see you at the next Gathering. Keep a lookout for the cat. Stay safe."

The gray tabby ducked her head. "Okay! You, too. Goodbye!" She turned around swiftly, bounding towards Spottedstar. Her thoughts were solely on this new rogue cat, and how there could be more than one. A shiver ran down her spine. The future didn't look peaceful for the Clans.

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Word Count // 1325

Not Edited

Hi! Another chapter is done! A new character! Any thoughts on her? Any ideas on this chapter at all? I'd love to hear any and all of them! And, if you have any feedback, feel free to tell me that as well! The cat above is the black she-cat, or, what Mintpaw thinks she looks like. She does look like that, mainly because I'm too lazy to find another cat picture. Okay, have a great day! Be sure to get plenty of rest! Goodbye!

Chapter 17

[image]

The next few moons flew by in a blur. Mintpaw was completely and utterly worn out. She would wake up early before dawn to meet with Leafpaw, then spend her days training. A fever had spread around the camp, and Echoleaf was worried that it may turn into greencough or whitecough. So, she had Mintpaw collect catmint and feverfew every morning until sun-high. Then, Mintpaw would aid Echoleaf in taking care of the sick cats. Also, with the threat of the rogues, she had to sit through some warrior apprentice training sessions. Although she was not required to participate, she did have to study the moves, just in case she needed to use them. Finally, by the time the sun had set, and it was time to rest, she would fret over what was going on. StarClan hadn't sent her a dream in a long, long time. For the first time ever, she found herself wishing that her ancestors would send her a dream, as violent as it may be. She wanted guidance, reassurance, that her ancestors were watching over them. However, nothing came. Not even at the Moonpool. Whenever she dipped her head in, all she could see was mist, as though the future was completely unclear.

A bright beam of light shone into the medicine den, right at Mintpaw's face. The tabby raised her paws wearily, sleepiness washing through her. She'd spent all night tossing and turning, worrying over the rogues along with the sickness, barely receiving any sleep. Now, yawning, as the dawn light shone on her, she realized there was no time to get any more sleep. She had to get up and help her Clan. Thankfully, she and Leafpaw had decided that they were going to stop their meetings for a brief period of time, due to the focus on the rogues. So, at least she didn't have to wake up before dawn anymore.

Mintpaw stumbled up, her muscles feeling saggy. All she wanted to do was collapse back into the nest, but there was work to be done. Echoleaf's nest was empty, and, with a glance outside, the gray tabby could tell that most of the Clan was up and about. She

hurried outside the den.

In the clearing, a group of cats was gathered around, chattering with excitement. Mintpaw bounded towards them. Flowerpaw, Icepaw, Adderpaw, and Robinpaw were all there. Their mentors were crowded around them as well. Birdshine, Flowerpaw's mentor, was announcing something. The gray tabby angled her ears to listen.

"So, Flowerpaw, you will be having your Warrior Assessment today," the brown she-cat meowed. "Me and Owlflight-" She motioned to the brown tom besides her "-will be assisting you. For the first portion, you'll be hunting, and I'll be watching. For the second, you'll need to show off your tree-climbing and fighting skills, which is where Owlflight comes in. Finally, you and him must catch a piece of prey together."

Mintpaw's ears flattened with surprise. *The Warrior Assessment sounds hard!* However, the ginger she-cat didn't look intimidated at all. Instead, she just nodded, a determined look on her face.

"Good luck, Flowerpaw!" Adderpaw meowed, swishing his tail.

The ginger she-cat's determined expression softened when it landed on the black-and-white tom. "Thanks!"

Mintpaw felt as if she wanted to throw up. *Flowerpaw has a crush on Adderpaw?* Her tail-tip twitched with amusement. *Thank StarClan I'm a medicine cat. I don't need to go through that kind of stuff.*

The other cats seemed oblivious to the two apprentices' connection. Icepaw and Robinpaw both assured Flowerpaw that she would do well, and Flowerpaw's parents stepped up to give their daughter's ears a proud lick. Then, Birdshine waved her tail, and led the two cats out of camp.

Adderpaw's attention turned towards Mintpaw once Flowerpaw was gone. "Oh, hi!" Although his tone was kind, the gray tabby couldn't help but feel her fur rise slightly. *He hasn't talked to me in days.* "Are you watching me and Robinpaw train?"

Mintpaw ducked her head, remembering the schedule that Echoleaf had told her the night before. "Yeah."

"I think we're just about to leave soon," Adderpaw offered. "Maybe there's some time for prey first. Do you guys want any?" As the three cats shook his head, he flicked his tail, then padded off to the fresh-kill pile. Before long, Icepaw had ducked away too, going on a patrol, leaving Mintpaw with Robinpaw.

Of course, the brown she-cat wanted to talk. "I hope Flowerpaw passes."

Mintpaw breathed a sigh of relief. There was no talk about medicine cats or warriors. That was good. "Yeah. I'm sure she will. I sat through a couple of her training sessions. She's really good."

Robinpaw blinked. "How would you know? You've never trained in that before."

The gray tabby felt her fur rise, but she forced it down. "Even if I haven't ever trained in fighting before, I can still tell a cat's skill." Okay, so maybe that wasn't true, but she was getting edgy. With barely any sleep, it was easy to get her annoyed.

Robinpaw nodded. "So, when to medicine cats get their full name? Do they take an assessment too?"

Mintpaw shrugged. "Our mentors give us our name when they think we're ready." She glanced towards Robinpaw, then wished she hadn't. The brown she-cat's eyes were wide.

"Really? There's no specific time? No assessment?" She looked as though she'd just seen a StarClan cat. "That's so... unorganized! So random. I would hate that, knowing that I don't know when I'm getting my full name." Her voice was criticizing.

Mintpaw tried shrugging off the annoyance. "Yeah, well, medicine cats have more to learn."

Robinpaw lowered her voice, but Mintpaw caught her saying something along the lines of, "Or maybe they just learn slower," causing her pelt to ruffle with annoyance. The brown she-cat was

basically suggesting that medicine cats were not as sharp as warriors.

It seemed to take forever before Adderpaw finished his prey and Mistyfur and Ivyfoot called to the three of them to lead them to the training grounds. Mintpaw trailed after the patrol, dragging her feet along the ground. The first couple training sessions had been interesting, when she'd never seen them before, but now she found them quite boring. She could be doing much more useful things, such as gathering herbs or helping sick cats.

Finally, they reached the Training Hollows. Mistyfur padded around. "Today we're going to learn how to rear," she meowed. "Like this." The gray she-cat stood on her hind legs, swiping at the air, before landing back onto her paws. As bored as Mintpaw was, she had to admit that it was super impressive. Adderpaw and Robinpaw's eyes were stretched wide.

The gray tabby sat to one side as she watched Adderpaw and Robinpaw practice. The two stood on their hind legs, trying to balance, as they swiped at the air, before tumbling to the ground. Mintpaw's pelt twitched with eagerness. *I want to try.* She tilted her head. *But would they let me?*

The warriors seemed to have their full attention on the training. If she asked, they might find it a waste of time. *But this is a waste of time for me! I can watch, but I'll still never be able to do it if I don't practice.*

Soon, Adderpaw and Robinpaw were panting, exhausted from the practices, and Mintpaw was bored out of her mind. She swished her tail back and forth mindlessly, barely paying attention.

"Robinpaw!" Mistyfur's voice, sounding on the edge of frustration, snapped Mintpaw out of her thoughts. "Remember, keep both paws dug into the ground, and don't lift one or the other, otherwise you'll tip over."

The brown she-cat nodded, her expression determined. She lifted up onto her hind legs, balancing for about a half second, before tumbling over.

Mintpaw twitched her tail-tip. She'd been watching Robinpaw and Adderpaw struggle for hours now. *How hard can it be?* She took a deep breath. "Mistyfur, Ivyfoot, can I try, too?"

The two warriors blinked in surprise at her request. They exchanged a glance. "Sure," Ivyfoot meowed slowly, "if you want to. I see no harm in that."

"What?!" Robinpaw's outraged protest followed her words. "This is a warrior thing, not a medicine cat thing!"

"But she can still try," Mistyfur meowed, sending a firm look towards her apprentice.

"Yeah," Adderpaw mewed. "She can take my spot. I'm exhausted."

"No." Ivyfoot tapped her apprentice's head. "You must keep practicing if you want to get this right."

The matter seemed decided. Mintpaw pushed herself up, bounding into the Training Hollows. The two warriors weren't paying much attention to her. The gray tabby reared up, trying to lift herself up onto her hind legs. Almost instantly, she tipped over, collapsing onto the ground. *This* is *hard!*

Robinpaw's expression was amused as she blinked at Mintpaw, almost laughing at her. Mistyfur had to tap her tail-tip to her apprentice's shoulder to return her attention to the training. The gray tabby felt a flare of anger stirring in her belly. *I will get this move down, and before Robinpaw, too!* With that goal in mind, she reared up once more, falling down almost instantly. She sighed. It was going to be a long while before she'd reach the goal.

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Word Count // 1550

Not Edited

Hi! Sorry for all these fillers. I've basically just been writing filler chapter after filler chapter. I haven't fully planned out the next one yet, but I do think that it should be more exciting! I'm

honestly probably just not going to detail a lot of Mintpaw's apprenticeship, since StarClan's done with the dream-sending. The picture at the top is Mistyfur. Okay, so, I'm going to go work on the next chapter now. Goodbye!

Chapter 18

[image]

Another moon had flown by. Flowerpaw had successfully received her warrior name of Flowershine. Icepaw had passed his Warrior Assessment soon after, getting the name of Iceclaw. Now, it was Adderpaw's turn to chatter excitedly about when he was becoming a warrior.

As for the rearing up move, Adderpaw had managed to get it down by the time the training session was over, but neither Robinpaw nor Mintpaw could master it yet. The brown she-cat had probably forgotten about the rivalry over the move, but the gray tabby practiced the move whenever she could. As soon as she had a break, she would rear up and try to balance for as long as she could. She would be true to the promise of her getting the move before Robinpaw. And, as she padded by Robinpaw and Flowershine talking, she often heard Robinpaw complaining about how Mistyfur kept pushing her to get it, and she always failed. This always gave Mintpaw a happy flick of her tail, knowing that she still had a chance to win.

At the moment, Mintpaw had ducked behind the medicine den. Most cats were out on patrol, and Echoleaf didn't need her for anything. So, she, of course, was practicing the move. She reared upwards, balancing on her hind legs.

"Whoah!" The gray tabby tumbled over. She pulled herself up, shaking out her pelt in frustration. Sometimes, it felt like she'd never get it. *Being a warrior is hard! Learning herbs is much easier, and more fun, too.* But she couldn't quit now. "Remember, keep both your hind legs in the ground," she mumbled to herself, lifting up into the air again.

This time, she didn't tumble over instantly. Excitement spiked her pelt. *I might be able to do the move!* As Mintpaw prepared to strike out a paw, Echoleaf's voice startled her.

"Mintpaw? Can you go check on Windstrike, please? I think we might need to move her to the medicine den."

Mintpaw tumbled over instantly, shock spiking her pelt, soon followed by embarrassment. Heat flowed through her fur. *Echoleaf hadn't seen that, had she?* If she had, the gray she-cat wasn't showing any signs of it. She blinked calmly at her apprentice, awaiting her answer.

The gray tabby ducked her head. "Of course." She bounded to the herb storage, picking out a bundle of feverfew, honey, catmint, and one poppy seed, in case the elder needed help falling asleep.

"When you're done, get some prey. There's a Gathering tonight," Echoleaf informed her before padding away, in the direction of the leader's den.

Mintpaw hurried towards the elders den, the thought of the Gathering quickening her steps. As she entered, she realized that Graywhisker and Mousepelt were gone. *They're probably eating some prey before the Gathering.* A hacking cough came from the back of the den.

Mintpaw stepped forward. Windstrike lay in her nest as cough after cough rattled through her bones. She felt a stab of sympathy for the elder as she padded near. "Hi, Windstrike."

The gray elder blinked up at her. "Hello. Are you going to give me something for my sickness?"

Mintpaw nodded, nudging the herbs towards her. "Here, eat this. The honey should help your throat, and the feverfew and catmint should help the illness." As Windstrike chewed, she pressed her nose gently to the elder's body, surprise flicking through her as she realized how warm it was. *Echoleaf was right; we do need to move Windstrike to the medicine den!*

"So," Windstrike's voice snapped her out of her thoughts, "while we're both here, why don't I tell you a story?"

Mintpaw fluffed her pelt. "Oh, no. You're sick. You need to rest."

The elder coughed. "I'm alright! Those herbs fixed me up just fine."

"We need to move you to the medicine den," Mintpaw mewed, shaking her head. "You need to rest."

"I'm fine," Windstrike insisted. "It's no fun with no stories."

Mintpaw couldn't help but feel some amusement bubble inside her. Sometimes, elders acted like kits, such as wanting to have fun when sick. "Okay, okay, fine. Then we'll move you to the medicine den."

Windstrike nodded, settling into her nest. "So, what story would you like to hear?"

Mintpaw twitched her tail-tip. "Can I ask you a question instead?" A question would be faster, and there had been one bugging her for the past moons. The elder nodded. The gray tabby took a deep breath. "What did Fireclaw do?"

Windstrike's eyes stretched wide with surprise at the question, then filled with horror. She didn't reply for a minute. When she'd finally calmed down, she ruffled her pelt uneasily, as though she didn't want to speak of the subject. "Oh, he's done many horrible, horrible things." She closed her eyes. "Perhaps they are too terrible to even speak of."

"But what did he do?" Mintpaw twitched her tail-tip, curiosity overcoming her sense and reason. "I keep hearing cats say that he's bad, but I never hear them say what he's done."

Windstrike blinked at her. "Very well. I'll tell you, if you're sure you want to hear the story."

Mintpaw shuffled her paws. On one side, she wasn't sure if she was ready for the gruesome story, but on the other, she really wanted to know why the FireClan cats treated Cobrapaw so badly! He was only a descendant of Fireclaw! *What could Fireclaw have possibly done?* "I'm sure."

Windstrike took a deep, shuddering breath. "As you know, each Clan was founded by its own cat. Ours was founded by Airfrost, or, should I say, Airstar. WaterClan was founded by Waterpelt,

Waterstar, EarthClan by Earthwhisker, Earthstar, and FireClan by Fireclaw. We don't call Fireclaw Firestar anymore. He doesn't deserve that title." She whisked her tail. "Anyway, FireClan was the strongest out of the four Clans. And when I mean strongest, I don't mean slightly more powerful, I mean that FireClan basically was the leader of all four Clans. When distributes happened between the Clans, it would be Fireclaw who decided which side was "correct". Now, at that time, he wasn't bad, nor evil. At that time, he was like a StarClan cat to us. Almost like a blessing that StarClan gave us. He was brave, strong, and wise, and made fair decisions, leading the Clans to victory against other cats."

Mintpaw could hardly believe her ears. Brave? Strong? Wise? Fair? That was nothing like the Fireclaw that she had heard about!

"But perhaps the victories and success clouded his judgement," Windstrike continued. "He developed a mindset that he could not be wrong. Whatever he said, no matter what he did, he was the correct one, and the other cats were the ones in the wrong. Now that was dangerous. He also wanted to stay as leader forever. He didn't want any other cat to take his spot. So, naturally, he became extremely greedy as well. From then on, it wasn't even doing what's right for his Clan.

He began seeing strong cats as a threat. He fired his deputy, saying that he would lead solely. He began punishing the strong and healthy cats - anyone, really, that might be able to fight him. But how can a Clan run with just sick and weak cats, and no deputy?"

Mintpaw fluffed her pelt. "What were his punishments?"

Windstrike's eyes clouded. "Oh, they were horrible. He separated kits from parents. He started seeing kits as threats, too, because they may be able to grow up and challenge him. Often, he imprisoned the strong cats, and killed their kits or mate right in front of their eyes! He starved them and hurt them."

"Didn't anyone stand up to him?" Mintpaw demanded. "Surely they can see what he's doing is wrong."

Windstrike bowed her head. "As I've said, they think that Fireclaw is

a blessing sent from StarClan. They don't believe that he can do any wrong. They think that he was right, and they were wrong, simply because they were strong and healthy.

Now, of course, perhaps they didn't actually think that. They might've been brainwashed into thinking that, or maybe the fear that he would hurt them even more made them think that. It was terrible. Cats starved, many died. Without kits and new cats, the Clan would surely die out soon."

"What about the other Clans?"

"They weren't as brainwashed as FireClan was, but they were just as scared." Windstrike frowned. "After all, FireClan was the most powerful at the time. They were terrified that Fireclaw would shoot them down. Finally, the Clans had enough. They gathered together, and Airstar, Earthstar, and Waterstar killed Fireclaw."

Mintpaw exhaled. "No wonder cats hate Fireclaw so much." *He separated kits from their parents and killed them?* A shiver ran down her spine. *I can't imagine what my life would be like without Snowfrost's care.* She pictured the FireClan camp. Fireclaw was towering over a kit, and its parents were begging him to spare the kit. She imagined the shrieks of horror. And, worst of all, she imagined *Cobrapaw* as Fireclaw's face. *Stop that,* she scolded herself. *Cobrapaw is not Fireclaw.*

"So, never put so much trust in anybody, Mintpaw." Windstrike blinked at her. "Never give any cat so much power that they can change your life so easily. The only thing you should ever give that much power to is your Clan, and not even your leader. Just your Clan, and do whatever is best for it."

Mintpaw bowed her head. She understood Windstrike's meaning. The cats of FireClan had put so much trust into Fireclaw that they allowed him to basically destroy their Clan.

"Now, help me up," Windstrike mewed, a cough racking through her. "I need to get to the medicine den, and I can't move on my own!"

Mintpaw sprang up, hurriedly nosing Windstrike to her paws, carefully guiding the elder out of the den. As the two trotted to the medicine den, no matter what she told herself, she couldn't help but feel slightly weary of Cobrapaw now.

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Word Count // 1660

Not Edited

Hi! This chapter is a little... gruesome? Well, what do you think of Fireclaw? I tried coming up with an evil thing that isn't copying too much of the original Warrior Cats series, but I'm not sure if I succeeded. Do you think it's enough for why every cat hates Fireclaw so much? The cat at the top is Windstrike. Okay, have a great day. Bye!

Chapter 19

[image]

The AirClan Gathering patrol seemed to be chattering with more excitement as they padded through the woods. Flowershine and Iceclaw's pelts were fluffed with joy as they trotted at the front of the patrol. The two new warriors seemed to be glowing with happiness. Adderpaw padded among them. Mintpaw pricked her ears. It seemed as though they were talking about Adderpaw's Warrior Assessment, as to when it was going to happen. Mintpaw, on the other hand, was gloomier than normal, trailing at the back of the patrol. Her mind was whirling on Fireclaw's story. She wasn't sure what to make of it. She felt guilty that she'd even thought about Cobrapaw differently since she had heard the story. She was acting like his mean Clanmates!

"Mintpaw?" Echoleaf's gentle voice made the tabby glance up at her mentor. "Are you okay?"

The gray tabby fluffed her fur. "Yeah, I'm fine. It's just that Windstrike just told me Fireclaw's story."

Echoleaf's face was grim as she turned away. "Gruesome, isn't it? I can't believe it had lasted for so long..." Her voice trailed off, and she shook her pelt. "We used to tell that story to *kits*, can you believe that? I remember my mother telling me that story! Then, thankfully, we realized that that story was perhaps too terrible for kits to listen to. Maybe it would be best to let the story fade away. But then, we wouldn't want to repeat the past, would we?"

"No," Mintpaw agreed. "Windstrike said I should never allow a cat to have that much power over me, to be able to change my life so easily."

Echoleaf bowed her head. "She's right. Fireclaw turned the lives of cats upside down! He was only able to do so because of the dedication and trust they put in him. With that, they gave him power. Too much power." She shuddered. "Never give that much

dedication to any cat. Only to your Clan as a whole," she warned, repeating Windstrike's words. Mintpaw bowed her head.

"Echoleaf!" Spottedstar's voice travelled towards them, and the golden she-cat beckoned to the medicine cat. Echoleaf shot Mintpaw an apologetic glance, then bounded away, towards the leader and deputy.

Mintpaw remained at the back of the patrol, not bothering to quicken her pace. In fact, she only seemed to go slower. She knew that Echoleaf and Windstrike hadn't meant for her mind to whirl as such - they were probably only trying to teach her a moral - but she couldn't help it. She couldn't help but think of Cobrapaw, and all the horrible things that his ancestor had done.

Suddenly, she felt as though she was being watched. The tabby stopped in her tracks, pricking her ears, gazing around the dark forest. Her Clanmate's happy chatter seemed to get further and further away as they padded on, not noticing that she'd stopped. Mintpaw ruffled her fur. There was definitely someone here. They were at the edges of the border, after all. "Who's there?"

A pair of striking green eyes suddenly blinked at her from the depths of the woods. Mintpaw let out a yelp of fear. *A rogue!* Her paws felt frozen in its place. She couldn't move. It was the rogue that Riverheart had described! Her pelt was as black as the night, blending in perfectly with the shadowy woods. Her eyes were an ice cold green, flashing with warning to back off.

The rogue blinked at Mintpaw's position, before a smile curved on her face, as though she found it funny that she'd scared an apprentice so badly. She was *amused* at the sight of Mintpaw's fear. Cruelty glimmered in her eyes. Finally, she eyed the gray tabby, before deciding that she would be no threat, and turned around, disappearing into the woods once more.

Mintpaw finally exhaled a breath she wasn't aware she'd been holding. Her body started to unfreeze. Without another glance at the trees, she bolted away, bounding towards the patrol as fast as her paws could carry her.

AirClan had already arrived at the Gathering by the time Mintpaw burst in. The clearing was crowded with cats. She earned many confused glances as she weaved through them. She must look weird. Her gray pelt was bristled with unease, her green eyes dancing around as though something was going to attack her at any moment. And, she was sure that there were leaves and burrs in her fur as well - she'd charged through many bushes in her hurry.

Mintpaw ignored the weirded glances and padded towards her friends. Cobrapaw, Cloverpaw, and Leafpaw were all sitting there, chatting. The three cats' eyes directed towards her as she neared. As she glanced at Cobrapaw, she gulped. Was it just her imagination, or was he larger than she'd remembered? The story was affecting her way of thinking! But as she stared in Cobrapaw's green eyes, she felt her vision flash. She saw him towering over kits, his eyes gleaming with cruelty, as he slashed their throats. She heard a voice - a she-cat's - begging him to stop.

Stop this thinking, Mintpaw scolded herself. *Cobrapaw is* not *Fireclaw.*

As she made her way through the crowd, she could hear Flowershine and Iceclaw telling everyone that they were now warriors, bragging about their new names. Mintpaw fluffed her pelt. She couldn't wait to do that when she got her full name, but that was going to take a while.

"Woah. What happened to you?" Leafpaw mewed as she plopped herself down between him and Cobrapaw. "You look like you've just charged through a forest!"

Cobrapaw snorted, nudging Mintpaw gently. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah," Cloverpaw added earnestly, flicking Leafpaw's ears.

Mintpaw exhaled. "I'm fine." She hesitated in telling them about the rogue, before making up her mind. *They are my friends.* "Well-"

"The Gathering is now starting!" Tigerstar yowled, and the clearing

fell silent. The dark tom was sitting towards the top of the tree. Spottedstar was perched besides him, and Moonstar and Sunstar was beneath her. It seemed as though the leaders were trying to make everything as normal as possible, but Mintpaw sensed some unease within between the four cats. There was only one thing on their mind: the rogues.

She was right. Tigerstar's report was rushed. "Prey is all well in FireClan. Greenleaf has brought lovely weather and plenty of prey. We have two new apprentices, Owlpaw and Rabbitpaw, and a new warrior, Cobrastrike."

Mintpaw's pelt fluffed with surprise as she turned around to blink at her friend. Cobrapaw- no, Cobrastrike, gave his chest fur a couple of modest licks as the clearing rang out with his and the apprentices' names. As the gray tabby raised her head to cheer for the new cats, she couldn't help but feel guilt and sympathy swirl in her stomach.

Cobrastrike didn't even tell us about that, because I gave him no time. Mintpaw made sure to yowl out her friend's name extra loud. *If I were him, that would've been the first thing I wanted to tell my friends, like Flowershine and Iceclaw were doing. And, it's even worse that the leader is rushing through it.*

Although Tigerstar had rushed Owlpaw and Rabbitpaw's introduction as well, his tone was different when he said Cobrastrike's name, as though the name left a bad taste on his tongue. That made Mintpaw's fur bristle with defense for her friend, but there wasn't much she could do.

The other leaders copied Tigerstar's method, giving their report swiftly. Obviously, it wasn't the topic they wanted to discuss. As soon as the cheers of Flowershine and Iceclaw's name faded, Spottedstar stepped forward. "We've been scenting rogues near our borders as well. It's alarmingly close, but they've never crossed it." She narrowed her eyes. "It's almost like they're playing with us."

Moonstar bowed her head. "Every once in a while, there would be rogues, but they'd always leave soon. But instead of the scents lessening, it only seems to be growing stronger." Her white pelt twitched anxiously. "It seems as though they're collecting more and

more cats to gather here."

Sunstar nodded. "It's safe to say that we'll always spot two to three rogues whenever we do border patrol," he meowed. "This is getting ridiculous! They can't just live so close to our borders!"

Tigerstar bowed his head in agreement. "And, since more and more of them are coming, it seems as though they're planning something against us." His words fell into silence.

Mintpaw's pelt bristled with worry. An attack? Surely they could take on a couple rogues. But from the leaders' gazes, she could tell that they were extremely worried over this.

The gray tabby's mind flashed back to the rogue she'd encountered right before arriving at the Gathering. Just a single glance at the she-cat had froze her to the bone, making a shiver run down her spine. She imagined them swarming her camp. Even though she was certain that her Clan would be able to take them on, the rogues would prove to be a threat.

Moonstar cleared her throat nervously. "Maybe they'll leave soon. Perhaps there's just something that they're waiting for by the border, and it'll be over soon. A cat could be carrying kits, and they're just waiting for the kits to come."

Sunstar nodded. "Perhaps." The leaders didn't seem to have much reassurance to offer their Clanmates after that.

The Gathering soon split up after. Sunstar waved his tail, leading the WaterClan cats out of the clearing first. Leafpaw informed them that his Warrior Assessment was coming up. And, after wishing Leafpaw good luck and congratulating Cobrastrike on his new name, Mintpaw hurried towards Spottedstar, who was waving her tail to the AirClan cats. There would be no time for sharing tongues. The leader's eyes sparkled with unease as she flicked her tail, leading the cats out of the clearing. And, as they padded, Mintpaw couldn't shake the feeling that a particular pair of green eyes was watching her.

Word Count // 1670

Not Edited

Hi! Here's another chapter. Yay for Cobrastrike! Okay, any thoughts on the rogues? Any ideas on how they may get involved in the future? Here's a tiny spoiler, since the dreams may be confusing. They will sort of be involved with the dreams that Mintpaw has had. I don't know if that helped at all, but there it is. By the way, I know I already used the green eye picture, but it's representing a different cat, and I'm too lazy to search for another one. Okay, have an amazing day! Make sure to drink lots of water! Bye!

Chapter 20

[image]

"Let every cat in AirClan gather around the Clanledge for a Clan meeting!" Spottedstar's yowl broke through the air, bouncing off of the trees.

Mintpaw poked her head out of the medicine den as several of her Clanmates got to their paws and trotted over towards the ledge. At the foot, Adderpaw sat, his tail curled around his paws proudly, his black-and-white fur gleaming in the sunset light. *He must've passed his Warrior Assessment!* The tabby fluffed her pelt proudly in her brother's behalf.

"Mintpaw! Come on!" Echoleaf called as she ducked out of the medicine den and towards the ledge.

The tabby glanced back at the herb pile that she was sorting. "Coming!"

Abandoning the leaves, Mintpaw bounded towards the ledge, wondering if she'd be able to go to sleep early. In the past moons, her mind had been occupied with many things. First, not only were the rogue scents becoming stronger and stronger, they were practically pressed *right* on the border! It was maddening to many Clan cats that rogues would even dare to do that, as though they were teasing them. Many in AirClan had called for an attack, but Spottedstar tried calming them down, saying that there was no reason to attack the rogues until they've done something wrong. Still, many cats were uneased at how close the rogues seemed to be. Secondly, StarClan had stopped in the dream-sending with Mintpaw. In fact, they'd completely closed themselves off! Whenever she arrived at the Moonpool to try and get more information on the future, she would be greeted with nothing, as though they had finished sending Mintpaw dreams and checked her off the to-do list. She could tell that the other medicine cats didn't have much luck, either. Their eyes were almost always worried when they woke up. Echoleaf had told her that she got warnings on

the weather, but nothing more than that. She had tried to ask StarClan about the rogues, but they'd simply padded away. And, with the Fireclaw story that Mintpaw had recently learned about, she wanted to know more about it, about Cobrastrike. But StarClan seems to be ignoring her prayers.

The only good thing that has come of this moon was that Mintpaw finally mastered the rearing up move, and Robinpaw hasn't yet. The tabby wanted somehow to do it right in front of the brown she-cat, to see her expression when she realized that a medicine cat could do it and she couldn't. *How would I get that to happen, though...?*

"I, Spottedstar, leader of AirClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice." The golden she-cat's voice snapped Mintpaw out of her thoughts. "They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turn."

Adderpaw's blue eyes shimmered as he listened to Spottedstar's words. Mintpaw's gaze caught onto Snowfrost. Her mother's pelt was fluffed with joy and pride as she blinked at her son. Suddenly, a small twinge of envy swirled in Mintpaw's stomach as she gazed around at her Clanmates' expressions. When I become a medicine cat, Snowfrost and Adderpaw aren't going to be there.

"Adderpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do." There was no hesitancy in Adderpaw's voice, and he gazed calmly back at Spottedstar.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Adderpaw, from this moment on, you shall be known as Adderclaw. StarClan honors your bravery and determination, and we welcome you as a full warrior of AirClan." Spottedstar rested her muzzle on Adderclaw's head as the new warrior gave her shoulder a lick.

"Adderclaw! Adderclaw!" Adderclaw's name rang through the clearing, bouncing off the trees, echoing through the camp.

Mintpaw raised her head, yowling out her brother's name as loudly

as she could. *I still remember the day we became apprentices. How could time have passed so fast? We were so close then...* She shook her head, as though shaking off the thoughts, giving Adderclaw's name another loud yowl before letting it fall into silence.

"You will be standing vigil tonight," Spottedstar meowed. "Congratulations."

Cats began to spread out. Snowfrost leapt forward, congratulating Adderclaw and giving him many licks on the ears, until his pelt fluffed with embarrassment and he had to gently push her away. Mintpaw's whiskers twitched with amusement at the exchange. She pushed herself to her paws, trotting over as well, about to congratulate her brother personally, but Flowershine shoved in front of her.

"Congratulations, Adderclaw!" Flowershine chirped sweetly.

Adderclaw puffed out his chest proudly. "Thanks!"

Mintpaw couldn't help but roll her eyes with amusement. They're definitely going to become mates. As she stepped forward to perhaps both congratulate her brother and tease him now, Iceclaw and Robinpaw bounced towards him as well.

"Great job!" Iceclaw mewed.

Robinpaw nodded. "I can't wait until I get my warrior name! Yours is amazing!" Cats had slowly begun to move away, disappearing into their dens or returning to their meals. The brown she-cat fluffed her pelt. "It's going to be so lonely being the only apprentice."

Adderclaw blinked, glancing over at Mintpaw to see if she heard. She had. The tabby's pelt was beginning to rise as she narrowed her eyes at the brown she-cat. Her brother cleared his throat awkwardly to defend her. "Well, Mintpaw's still an apprentice." Okay, so he could've done better with the defense, but points for effort.

Robinpaw blinked, as though she'd forgotten that the tabby was an apprentice as well. "Well, yeah, but I mean *real* apprentices."

This time, Flowershine and Iceclaw glanced over at Mintpaw along with Adderclaw. The tabby's pelt was bristled now, and she was glaring at Robinpaw. Iceclaw's eyes flashed with nervousness and he glanced away quickly. Adderclaw opened his jaws and shut them, obviously trying to defend Mintpaw while not offending his friend. Flowershine, however, had her yellow eyes glowing with amusement.

Mintpaw had enough of Robinpaw, and how she acted so lowly towards medicine cats. That's it. The gray tabby jumped forward, about to give the brown she-cat a piece of her mind, but Flowershine interrupted her.

"You're not mad, are you, Mintpaw?" The ginger she-cat blinked innocently, and flicked her tail-tip over Robinpaw's ears affectionately. "Robinpaw was only joking. You're not getting riled up over a joke, are you?"

It was clear that Robinpaw was not joking. The brown she-cat even looked confused at her friend's words. However, with a glance from Flowershine, Robinpaw nodded, confirming that she was indeed "joking".

Mintpaw's pelt burned with anger. Iceclaw and Adderclaw glanced at her, tense. However, when Flowershine let out a fake laugh, as though the entire thing were a joke, the toms forced a laugh as well. Now Mintpaw knew whose side they were on.

Those two stuck up she-cats- Mintpaw forced herself to calm down. *What are you going to do, attack them? They've got more training than you do. You're only going to make a fool out of yourself. They* want *a reaction. Calm down. Let's see if they're laughing when they're sick.*

Mintpaw forced a smile and a laugh, along with smoothening her pelt. "Yeah. Real funny joke."

Flowershine looked angry that Mintpaw hadn't reacted and didn't seem upset. She nodded stiffly, then spun around, stalking away from the conversation. Robinpaw hurried after her. After a quick mew that Mintpaw couldn't make out, Adderclaw and Iceclaw bounded after them. The gray tabby rolled her eyes. *Wow,*

Adderclaw. You sure picked a real winner to have a crush on.

As soon as the thought popped into Mintpaw's mind, she felt guilty. As much as she was angry at Flowershine at the moment for defending Robinpaw, the ginger she-cat was a really good warrior. She was loyal to her Clan and hardworking. Defending Robinpaw was only a sign of her loyalty to her friends.

Calm down, Mintpaw, the tabby repeated to herself. *Don't freak out. She hurried back to the medicine den.* Echoleaf was in the nursery, checking on Grassfeather's newborn kits. The tabby finished with the herb sorting as quickly as possible, before sinking into her nest, shutting her eyes. Instantly, she was sound asleep.

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Word Count // 1384

Not Edited

Hello! I really hate Robinpaw and Flowershine in this chapter. More Robinpaw than Flowershine, but both of them are just annoying. I don't have any more to say for the Author's Note, because this is pretty much a filler chapter. Okay, bye!

Chapter 21

[image]

The early morning sunlight splashed slid into the camp, lighting up the clearing slowly. A breeze ruffled through the trees, making the branches sway. No cat was up yet, for it was still before dawn.

Mintpaw slid out of the medicine den, her pelt ruffled with sleep. Yesterday, she bumped into Leafpaw while collecting herbs at the EarthClan border, and somehow, he'd convinced her to meet him at the borders early morning. She couldn't help but feel her pelt twitch guiltily that she was leaving the camp while the Clan had so much tension, preparing for the rogues. She was escaping to have fun, while her Clanmates were working hard. *We shouldn't do this any longer, but one more time couldn't hurt, right?* Mintpaw ducked under a branch, trying to convince herself of that as she hurried towards the border.

Leafpaw, as usual, was waiting for her by the time she'd arrived. The gray tabby slid to a halt, rubbing her pelt against her friends' in a good morning greeting. As stressed as she was in the past days, whenever she saw Leafpaw, she instantly felt better and cheered up. "Good morning, Leafpaw!"

Leafpaw blinked at her. "Morning! And, it's Leafwhisker, now." His green eyes were gleaming proudly.

The tabby's eyes widened with surprise and pride for her friend. "Really? Congratulations! When did that happen?"

"Around half a moon ago." Leafwhisker swished his tail.

Mintpaw nodded and congratulated him again. *Another friend who received their full name! I can't wait until I get mine!*

Leafwhisker blinked at her, as though he could read her mind. "Don't worry, you're sure to get yours soon. But now, since I'm a full warrior and you're an apprentice, I get to order you around." It was

a running joke that they had.

Mintpaw rolled her eyes playfully. "Sure, I'd definitely listen to a little fur-ball."

Leafwhisker huffed, pretending to be upset, before changing the subject. "So, how's things in your Clan going?"

Mintpaw tilted her head. "Almost every cat in my Clan wants to attack the rogues, and force them to leave," she meowed, "but Spottedstar says we can't do anything until the rogues physically provoke us first."

Leafwhisker nodded. "Us, too, but Moonstar says that we should send a patrol to find out what the rogues' plan is."

"That sounds like a good idea." Mintpaw shook out her pelt, not wanting to talk about the rogues any longer. "So, what do you want to do this morning?"

Leafwhisker's green eyes sparkled. "So, you remember that strange forest that we'd found? Let's go explore it!"

Mintpaw's pelt ruffled uneasily, remembering how she felt as though something had been watching them the last time she'd entered. "What if the rogues are there?"

Leafwhisker thrust his head over his shoulder, pointing in the direction of WaterClan's border, or, for him, FireClan's border. "All the rogue scents have been in that direction, downhill. The forest is up in this direction."

Mintpaw nodded slowly. He did have a point. All the reports have been in the direction of WaterClan's border, and nothing had been found uphill.

Seeing that she wasn't fully convinced, Leafwhisker nudged her gently. "Don't worry, if there are rogues, I'll protect you!"

Mintpaw scoffed, nudging him back. "I don't need your protection." Okay, so maybe that wasn't true, but she and Leafwhisker often teased each other like that, seeing who was "tougher" than the

other. Still, affection warmed her pelt. "Let's go."

The two began another race, bounding up the hills. Their tails streamed out behind them as wind whistled through the fur. Mintpaw's heart was practically bursting with joy as she pulled ahead of Leafwhisker. For this moment, she'd completely forgotten about the stress and pressure that faced her back at camp.

As they bounded into the forest, Mintpaw exhaled, panting, waiting for Leafwhisker. The brown tom appeared soon after her, panting hard. "Wow, Mintpaw! You're fast!"

The gray tabby fluffed her fur out proudly, but was too busy catching her breath to respond. Once the two had healed from their race, Leafwhisker lead the way inside the forest, Mintpaw following hesitantly.

The gray tabby kept glancing around, for she felt the same feeling as last time, as though a pair of eyes were stuck on her pelt. However, as Leafwhisker engaged her in a conversation, she managed to somewhat shake off the feeling and enjoy herself.

"Petalmist wanted me to become a warrior a little while before I got my warrior name," Leafwhisker meowed. "She thought having another warrior would be good for the Clan, especially with the rogue threat. But Moonstar's a real stickler to the Warrior Code and tradition. She refused until I was twelve moons, at the very least, even though I knew all the materials."

Mintpaw nodded. She had noticed in Gatherings at how the white she-cat seemed to follow StarClan a lot more strictly than the other leaders, always glancing up at the sky to see if their ancestors were upset, even if it was clear that the sky was clear. Any sign of the clouds moving and she would change the subject. "Yeah. Does Moonstar enforce the code a lot?"

Leafwhisker snorted. "Enforce it? Definitely! She's always glancing over her shoulder to make sure we're not breaking the code. I remember when me and Amberheart were apprentices, once she went to the fresh-kill pile to get a piece of prey because her mentor had given her permission. Moonstar practically stomped over and

asked her if she'd gotten permission, then checked with her mentor! But, after that, she seemed to realize that she needed to back off a bit." Leafwhisker swished his tail. "Moonstar's kind of like Robinpaw, isn't she? They're both obsessed with the Warrior Code, it seems."

Mintpaw tilted her head, about to ask how the brown tom knew about Robinpaw's obsession with the code, before realizing that the two had spoken several times at Gatherings. An unfamiliar and uncomfortable feeling swirled in her stomach, and she twitched her tail-tip, trying to calm herself down. *You're just upset because you don't like Robinpaw,* she told herself. Nevertheless, she changed the subject. "How's your Clan doing with the rogues?"

Leafwhisker fluffed his pelt. "Well, Moonstar hates the rogues, that's for sure. With a burning passion, perhaps. She thinks that they might cross the border and steal our prey. She wants to get rid of them."

Before either cat could comment any more, the bushes besides them rustled. Leafwhisker's head shot in the direction of the undergrowth before nosing Mintpaw behind him, glaring at the bush, waiting for something to come out. Mintpaw's breath hitched. *Is it a rogue?*

A silver she-cat slid out of the bush. Leafwhisker seemed to relax slightly at the sight of one cat only, but Mintpaw only stiffened. She felt as though she might pass out. The silver she-cat was the exact same one from her dream with Cloudpool! She had the same markings, the same gray fur, the same green eyes. She had a bad feeling about this cat.

"Leafwhisker," Mintpaw whispered, "we should go now."

However, the silver cat had already spoken, catching Leafwhisker's attention. "Greetings."

The brown tom glanced at Mintpaw. The tabby sighed, nodding at him. It would only be polite to respond. "Hello."

The silver she-cat seemed pleased with their response, and ruffled her fur. "My name's Luna. What's yours?"

At this, Mintpaw couldn't imagine how she would be scary. Luna seemed fairly nice. The nerves vanished. Besides, she hadn't even seen Luna do anything bad in her dream. "My name's Mintpaw, and this is Leafwhisker." So far, she'd identified Luna as a rogue, but having no relationship with the ones that were threats to the Clans.

The silver she-cat blinked. "Those are interesting names." Her pelt suddenly fluffed with excitement, making Mintpaw jump back slightly in shock. "Oh, I know you two! I've seen you before! You were in this forest before!"

Mintpaw and Leafwhisker exchanged a glance. *Oh, so she's the one that's been watching us,* the gray tabby realized.

Before the conversation could continue any longer, a yowl sounded from down the hill, from the Clans' territory. The two Clan cats' heads snapped in that direction, their pelt fluffed. Whatever it was, it sounded like trouble!

"It was great meeting you Luna," Mintpaw mewed quickly as Leafwhisker half-bounded down the hill, trying not to look like he was in a rush to be impolite.

"You too," Luna mewed back dreamily. "You'd better hurry, the Clans sound like they're in trouble. I would hate to hear that they got hurt."

That sounded like dismissal to Leafwhisker. He managed a quick "Goodbye!" before speeding down the hill, Mintpaw right on his tail. The two touched noses briefly in farewell as they reached the border, each heading their own way. Yowls grew louder and louder as Mintpaw bounded to camp, and her heart thumped in her chest. *What could be happening?*

As the gray tabby passed a patch of marigold, she plucked a few stems swiftly before continuing her path. *I never should've left to meet Leafwhisker.* The camp was right in sight. The yowls coming from it made the she-cat terrified, a frozen feeling freezing her from paw to ears. However, she burst into the camp, and was greeted with the sight of fighting cats. The rogues had attacked AirClan's camp.

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Word Count // 1562

Not Edited

Hello! Here's another chapter! What do you think of Luna? How do you think she'll be involved in the future and what part do you think she'll play? I'd love to hear your predictions and thoughts! By the way, the cat at the top is Luna! The next chapter is probably going to be a lot of fighting! Oh, and the name Amberheart was made by dreamcloudofstarclan from the Name that Apprentice! Thanks for the awesome name! Okay, I'm going to go write the next chapter now. Bye!

Chapter 22

[image]

Mintpaw held her breath as the yowls swarmed around her. She dropped the marigold. Fur and claws flashed, so quickly that she couldn't tell one cat from the other. Fear froze her to the spot. The rogues seemed to be fighting well, and giving the warriors trouble. She tried to spot Snowfrost and Adderclaw within the crowd, praying that this wasn't when they died. She'd hated the scenes of the dream where she'd seen her kin laying on the ground, their lifeless eyes staring at her. But, it was useless. She couldn't catch a glance at Snowfrost's white pelt and Adderclaw's black-and-white one.

Suddenly, claws snagged Mintpaw's pelt. She yelped, spinning around, coming face-to-face with a large brown tom. His amber eyes flashed as he swiped out another paw at her. The gray tabby was barely able to dodge in time. She had no fighting skills, and these rogues didn't follow the Warrior Code! They wouldn't leave her alone!

"You're a weak Clan cat," the rogue spat when he realized that she couldn't fight back. "It won't take long to get rid of you."

Mintpaw ducked underneath another swinging paw, fear striking her belly. She doubted she could run away; the rogue would surely catch up, and with the large crowd of cats, it would be hard to weave through them. She couldn't keep this dodging on forever!

The rogue's eyes glittered with frustration as she managed to dodge yet another one of his blows. Mintpaw didn't know how she was doing it. Perhaps it was because she was in danger, so her senses and skills were sharper.

"Eagle!" A ginger tom bounded over, eyeing Mintpaw as though she was no threat, which she wasn't, before nodding to the brown tom. "Come on, let's go help Mamba get the leader."

Mintpaw flicked her ears. *There's that name again. Mamba.* She shook her head, as though she was just processing the ginger rogue's words. *They're going to gang up on Spottedstar!*

Eagle eyed Mintpaw with distain. "She doesn't know how to fight. Just let me finish her off, Flame."

Flame bristled his fur. "If she doesn't know how to fight, then she'll be no threat! We need to go help Mamba!"

The two toms spoke as though Mintpaw wasn't even there. Battle raged around them. The gray tabby suddenly realized why AirClan was having such a hard time fighting off the rogues: the rogues outnumbered them. They were so outnumbered that Eagle and Flame had time to just talk!

As Eagle turned back towards Mintpaw, the tabby tried looking as harmless as possible. Finally, the brown tom nodded. "Okay, let's go." Shooting a glare at Mintpaw, he and Flame bounded into the crowd, towards the center. The gray tabby caught sight of Redfeather leaping on them, but she knew that the ginger tom couldn't hold both of them off for long.

The gray tabby scrambled to her paws, bounding towards the medicine den. Claws snagged her fur as she ran and hisses filled her ears, but she did her best to ignore them, slipping out of their hold and bounding as quickly as possible towards the den.

Echoleaf was crouched inside, her paws extended and claws out, ready to attack. When she realized it was Mintpaw, however, her position loosened, and she let the gray tabby in. "The entrance for the medicine den is narrow," she explained, "so it's easy to protect. No rogue was able to get in."

"Thank StarClan for that," a voice in the shadows muttered.

Mintpaw spun around, realizing that it was Grassfeather. The queen was huddling her kits close towards her, licking their pelts soothingly. Relief filled her now that she knew the queen was safe. And, looking deeper, she realized that Windstrike, Graywhisker, and Mousepelt was all there, too. The only cats out were warriors.

"We're outnumbered." Echoleaf's voice brought Mintpaw's attention back towards her. "We need to go get help." She glanced sideways at the tabby, and Mintpaw's pelt suddenly fluffed, realizing what Echoleaf meant.

"Okay," Mintpaw mewed, "I'll go."

Echoleaf bowed her head. "Try FireClan first." She hesitated, before continuing. "As spirited as they are, they're good at fighting. They should be able to help us the most, although it may be hard to convince them."

"I'll try," Mintpaw meowed.

"We'll help defend while you're gone," Graywhisker meowed, pushing himself to his paws and joining Echoleaf at the entrance. Windstrike and Mousepelt nodded.

Mintpaw dipped her head, slipping out of the den. Her muscles were strained as she weaved through the crowd, trying not to get hurt. Relief filled her when she spotted Snowfrost, still very much alive, although fighting off two rogues. She continued.

The gray tabby rushed through the forest, her paws skimming the ground in her haste. Her tail streamed out behind her and wind whistled through her fur. She burst out of AirClan's forest and to the beach of the lake. FireClan's territory was right on the other side. To not cause confusion, she kept on the bank, bounding around the lake towards the FireClan forest.

As soon as she reached it, musty scents bathed her tongue. It was familiar, something she often scented on Cobrastrike. However, the rogue scents were thicker, too. After all, the Clans had guessed that the rogue base was by here. This made her pelt fluff up in confusion. *Why would the rogues attack us when FireClan was right here?* Blinking at the forest, she realized that bushes were trampled on, branches were broken on the forest grounds, and leaves were everywhere. The answer hit her: the rogues had already attacked FireClan. *Would they even be able to help us then?* Mintpaw shook out her pelt. *I've got to try.*

The gray tabby leapt into FireClan's territory, padding deeper into the forest, using the scents to guide her towards the camp. The deeper she padded, the cleaner the forest was, letting her know that the rogues' attack had been unsuccessful. This made her paws tingle with hope. Perhaps FireClan would be able to help them.

Suddenly, the bushes behind her rustled. Mintpaw froze, fear striking her. She'd heard all tales about how when FireClan fought, they fought like TigerClan. Sure, TigerClan was strong, but it was also vicious and cruel. Being caught on FireClan's territory wasn't something she wanted to do.

As the gray tabby slowly turned around, four cats slid out from the bushes. A white tom was in the lead, followed by a ginger she-cat, a younger black tom, and... Mintpaw felt relief tingle through her pelt. *Cobrastrike!*

Cobrastrike's eyes widened with surprise when his gaze landed on the gray tabby. "Mintpaw? What are you doing here?"

The white tom instantly swung his muzzle towards Cobrastrike, his lips pulled back into a snarl. "So you know her? Were you the one that brought her onto our territory?"

Cobrastrike's pelt bristled at the accusation, and Mintpaw's stomach burned with guilt. She hadn't meant to get him into trouble! "No!" the gray tabby mewed before Cobrastrike could speak. "I came here on my own account."

The ginger she-cat blinked at Mintpaw. "You're a medicine cat," she noted. "Are you here to see Nightstrike?"

Mintpaw fluffed her pelt nervously. "Er- no, I'm here to see Tigerstar."

Confusion filled the FireClan cats' glances.

"See Tigerstar?" The white tom looked calmer, although still agitated. "Why would AirClan send a medicine cat *apprentice* to see our leader? What kind of respect are they showing us?" The tom's pelt bristled. "Who does AirClan think they are? Sending an

apprentice to see our leader?"

"No!" Mintpaw squeaked hurriedly. "It's not that! It's that Spottedstar can't come at the moment!"

"Why not?" the ginger she-cat demanded.

The gray tabby paused. *Should I tell them? They might think we're weak! But we need their help...* "The rogues have attacked our camp."

Throughout the conversation, Mintpaw noted that Cobrastrike had barely spoken. Perhaps it was because the two other warriors were senior warriors, the young black tom was clearly an apprentice, but it was about Cobrastrike's attitude, too. The tom kept glancing at his paws and his tail-tip kept twitching uneasily, casting nervous looks towards his Clanmates. It was as though he were *afraid* of them.

The white tom let out a mocking laugh. "The rogues? Is that all?"

"The rogues attacked us the other day, too," the ginger she-cat piped up, her eyes glittering with amusement. "We managed to fight them off easily."

Mintpaw felt her pelt bristle with anger. For all she knew, her Clanmates could be dying, while these FireClan cats were *laughing* at them!

"Go home," the ginger she-cat meowed. "If you can't fight off something as easy as rogues, that's not our problem."

"We're outnumbered!" Mintpaw mewed, her voice tight with fury.

"So?" The white tom swished his tail. "Go."

Cobrastrike cleared his throat nervously. In that one small movement, he'd brought the attention of the entire patrol on him, including them glaring at him angrily. "Maybe we should bring Mintpaw to see Tigerstar."

The white tom snarled. "You just want to help the other Clans! You're not loyal to your own!"

Mintpaw gasped, her eyes widening with shock. How could he accuse Cobrastrike of that? If anyone said that to her, even though she was a medicine cat, she would be furious! However, her friend simply blinked at his Clanmate calmly, his gaze cold, although she could see that he was struggling to keep his anger under control. "It's in the Warrior Code that we need to help other Clans that are in trouble, Icestrike. We can't defy that, can we?"

Icestrike glared at him. "Fine! Let's go!" Flicking his tail, he led the patrol deeper into the forest.

Mintpaw fell besides Cobrastrike, brushing her pelt against his to calm herself. He nudged her back affectionately. "Thanks."

Her friend shook his head. "Don't thank me yet. It'll be hard to convince Tigerstar."

"But wouldn't he follow the Warrior Code?" Mintpaw questioned.

Cobrastrike snorted. "Sure, but he's not a strict follower. The Warrior Code also says to defend your Clan, and he may think that by not helping, he's defending his Clan." Seeing Mintpaw's worried expression, he added, "I'll help you, although I don't know how big of an assist I can be."

Mintpaw fluffed her fur. "Aren't you worried about getting into trouble?" His Clanmates had already accused him of being not loyal, simply because of a tale that had been passed down from a long time ago. To help her in front of his leader...

The tom shrugged. "It's fine. If they want to believe that I'm not loyal, it's only causing more stress on them, not me." However, Mintpaw could see that he didn't believe that. He wanted to be accepted within his Clan. She felt a strike of sympathy, and brushed her pelt against her friend's again.

Soon, the FireClan camp was in sight. Cobrastrike leaned down, whispering into Mintpaw's ear. "Prepare yourself. It's going to be hard to convince Tigerstar to do anything."

Word Count // 1840

Not Edited

Hello! Sorry that this chapter is kind of long. I actually had to break my original plan up into 2 chapters. So, a little spoiler, it's going to be hard to convince Tigerstar to help, but don't worry, while that's happening, AirClan's still holding up. They're not losing to the rogues just yet. So, any thoughts on Cobrastrike's Clanmates? If so, I'd love to hear them! Eagle and Flame are up top! Bye!

Chapter 23

[image]

Mintpaw took a deep breath, collecting herself. She'd only caught glances at the FireClan leader from Gatherings, and to her, he looked terrifying, just as a FireClan cat was described to be. She didn't want to talk to him, but she would have to.

Icestrike stopped right outside the camp. "This is ridiculous," he growled, turning around. "Tigerstar's not going to agree to see an apprentice!"

The ginger she-cat nodded. "I don't see any point in this."

"Well, if we don't, it'll be against the Warrior Code," the black-furred apprentice mewed. His voice startled Mintpaw, for it was the first time that he'd spoken in her presence. "We should at least let her see him."

"Be quiet, Nightpaw," Icestrike snapped. "We didn't ask for your advice."

Mintpaw fluffed her pelt. She was thankful for Nightpaw's words, and felt bad about the way that Icestrike was talking to him. However, she was impatient. "Can I go see Tigerstar now?"

The FireClan cats' gazes swung towards her, and she almost shrank down. Finally, after considering Nightpaw's words, Icestrike nodded, and led them into the camp.

The FireClan scent grew stronger as Mintpaw padded inside. The gray tabby bristled her pelt as her nerves grew, gently pressing herself to Cobrastrike's side for comfort. The attention of the cats inside the camp turned towards her, narrowing with suspicion and hostility. However, no cat spoke. Tension hung thick in the air, waiting for someone to talk. Icestrike snorted, but made no other sound.

"Cobrastrike?" Finally, a cat broke the silence. Mintpaw diverted her gaze towards the voice, and found a gray-and-white she-cat blinking at them. "What's going on? Who's this?"

At her voice, the clearing broke out in chatter.

"Be quiet, Viperfang!" a tortoiseshell she-cat mewed angrily. "You have no place in this! For all we know, you're just pretending so you can betray the Clan!"

The accusation seemed absolutely ridiculous.

Viperfang clearly thought so, for her fur bristled. "Believe that if you want, Pebbleclaw, but you're just causing yourself more worry!"

Cobrastrike jumped forward, glaring at the crowd. "How could you say that? What has Viperfang ever done to betray your trust?" Nobody responded.

Mintpaw blinked. Whoever Viperfang was, Cobrastrike seemed to be very protective over her. Together, the two looked very powerful. However, as they turned away, the gray tabby could see that Viperfang looked weary and rather tired.

The conversation continued as though the outburst had never happened.

"What's that AirClan cat doing here? Is she here to see Nightstrike?"

"No," Icestrike called back. "She's here to see Tigerstar."

The Clan had about the same reaction that Icestrike did, talking about disrespect, but Mintpaw was too weary to care. All she wanted was Tigerstar to arrive so she could ask him for help. Worry stirred in her stomach. She hoped her Clanmates were okay.

"Where's Tigerstar?"

"Out on patrol."

"He's not going to be happy when he comes back."

Mintpaw practically shrank in her pelt. She didn't want to face the angry leader of FireClan. The patrol moved away from the gray tabby as Cobrastrike led Viperfang over. The gray-and-white she-cat sat down next to the AirClan tabby, brushing her pelt against hers comfortingly. "Cobrastrike told me that you were here to ask Tigerstar for help."

Instantly, Mintpaw felt calmer. Viperfang's blue eyes glowed kindly, and her pelt was warm. She gave off a mother vibe, one that Mintpaw often felt from Snowfrost. The tabby instantly liked the gray-and-white she-cat. "Yeah. AirClan's in trouble."

Cobrastrike nodded uneasily, shuffling his paws. "Well, you might be here for a while. Tigerstar normally takes a long time with his hunts." He blinked at Mintpaw's worried expression, but there wasn't much he could say. "I'll go get you some prey." The tom ducked away into the crowd.

Mintpaw sighed, crouching down. She felt Viperfang's fur brush hers as the she-cat followed. "Don't worry. Tigerstar's not heartless, although it'll be difficult for you to convince him to help."

The gray tabby blinked at Viperfang, confused. The gray-and-white she-cat didn't seem to mind speaking bad about her leader. *She'd called him heartless, after all. Maybe that's because of the way that the other cats treat her.* Mintpaw blinked. *Why* do *the other cats treat her so badly? Oh*-Realization suddenly hit the gray tabby.

Viperfang watched her, amused. "Yes, I'm Cobrastrike's mother," she mewed, as though she could read the medicine apprentice's mind.

Mintpaw ducked her head. That explained a lot. "I'm sorry about the way the other cats treat you."

Viperfang sighed. "Have you heard Fireclaw's story?" When the AirClan she-cat nodded, she twitched her tail-tip. "Well, I suppose you can understand why they they act like such."

"But it's unfair!" Mintpaw protested. "You and Cobrastrike aren't Fireclaw!"

Viperfang swished her tail. "Their logic is that since we're Fireclaw's descendants, that must mean that Fireclaw was the father of one of our ancestors. He must've then taught and raised that ancestor, and that ancestor would pass his mindsets down to the next generation, and so on." The gray-and-white she-cat looked away. "It doesn't make sense, since that was thousands of moons ago. But it's okay. You get used to it once in a while."

Mintpaw twitched her ears. "But don't you ever want to hurt them back?"

Viperfang blinked, thinking. "No," she meowed at last. "They're still my Clanmates. I can only work the hardest for my Clan and hopefully they'll forget about the Fireclaw thing."

"But what about Cobrastrike?"

Viperfang hesitated. "It's hard to raise a happy kit with these conditions," she admitted, "but here's what I've been teaching him: Say we were on a cliff. Our Clanmates are attacking us with words, backing us up further and further. If we let them, we'll soon fall off. I've been repeating the same words to him: Whatever you do, don't let them push you off the cliff. Do not fall. Do not show any reaction to their taunts. It's hard to do, but he manages to accomplish it better than me sometimes, other than when it comes to other cats attacking me."

Mintpaw nodded, remembering how unbothered Cobrastrike had seemed when Icestrike accused him of betraying FireClan compared to when another cat had done the same thing to Viperfang. If she didn't know the tom personally, she would've passed for his act, too.

The entrance of the camp rustled as Tigerstar padded in, closely followed by two other cats. Each cat was carrying prey. The dark tom's eyes narrowed when they landed on Mintpaw.

The gray tabby felt her fur bristle uneasily and she pushed herself to her paws. "Greetings, Tigerstar," she meowed, bowing her head. "AirClan is in trouble, and we need your help." She could feel the FireClan leader's gaze boring into her pelt. How long had it been

since she left AirClan's territory? How long would they be able to fend off the rogues?

"Interesting..." Tigerstar dropped his prey off. "Rogues, is it?"

Mintpaw's pelt bristled with surprise. *How did he guess it?* "Yes, Tigerstar."

"We had trouble with the rogues the other day." Tigerstar climbed atop a rock, which Mintpaw assumed was their version of a Clanledge. "They were quite difficult to fend off, but not too hard for us."

"Yes, Tigerstar." Mintpaw paused, realizing that she needed to choose her words carefully and not let her impatience show through. "That's why AirClan needs your help." Her paws itched with worry. Was her Clan okay?

"It would be best for us not to get involved," Tigerstar mused. "I wouldn't want my warriors to get any more hurt."

Mintpaw's pelt fluffed with surprise. Desperation seized her. She had to convince him! It was too late to run to EarthClan or WaterClan! Who knows what shape AirClan would be in once she'd consulted them!

Before she could speak, however, Viperfang's voice popped up. "But it's in the Warrior Code, Tigerstar. We must help other Clans that are in trouble."

The tom's head swung towards her. "Don't talk to me about the Warrior Code," he snarled. "You know nothing! The Code also says to defend your Clan, and by not getting involved, I am defending my Clan!"

Viperfang didn't seem bothered. "Yes, but by getting rid of the rogues once and for all, perhaps through this battle, it's also defending your Clan," she reasoned. The tom still didn't seem to budge. "Wouldn't you like to prove to AirClan once and for all that FireClan's better? By doing this, you're saving them, and they'd be in debt to us."

This seemed to get Tigerstar's approval. "Fine. Very well," he grouched, leaping off of the rock. Protests followed this, shouting at Viperfang for changing Tigerstar's mind. Cobrastrike pressed himself to his mother's side protectively. "Viperfang, Cobrastrike, you two can be on the patrol. I don't care much if the two of you get hurt. And, I guess, Sharpfur, Briarmist, and Windpelt. Sharpfur's the leader of the patrol. Bring back any other news to me." With that, Tigerstar stalked off, as though this was only a little thing.

The FireClan cats grouched, pushing themselves to their paws. They didn't seem very happy to be on the patrol. Only Viperfang and Cobrastrike seemed somewhat pleased. With a flick of his tail, Sharpfur led the patrol out of the camp, charging through the forest, towards AirClan's territory.

Mintpaw's paws skimmed the ground as she ran alongside them. Her tail streamed out behind her and her heart pounded in her chest. She'd gotten help for her Clan! She only hoped that she wasn't too late...

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Word Count // 1594

Not Edited

Hi! Sorry of this chapter sucks. I was pretty tired when I wrote it. Also, I know like the cats kept going like 'it's going to be so hard to convince Tigerstar' then Tigerstar was pretty easily convinced- sorry, I was just honestly lazy. Well, any thoughts on Viperfang? Her picture is up top. I know it doesn't look much like Cobrastrike, but he got a lot of genes that made him look more like Fireclaw. It's like the recessive genes, plus his father's. I don't know if that made any sense, but there it is. Okay, bye!

Chapter 24

[image]

Mintpaw raced back towards AirClan's territory. She had always been quick on her paws, and soon pulled ahead of the FireClan patrol in her worry. Yowls filled her ears as they bounded towards the camp, and her paws itched. *I hope my Clanmates are okay!*

Glancing over her shoulder as she ran, she saw that the FireClan warriors had more of a determined expression now. The disappointed and unwilling glint in Sharpfur, Briarmist, and Windpelt's eyes had faded. They seemed to actually want to help now, perhaps only to prove that they were better than AirClan, as Viperfang had reasoned. Whatever the reason is, Mintpaw was glad that they were going to put in effort.

As they neared the camp, worry in the gray tabby's belly only grew. *What if we're too late? What if one of my Clanmates are seriously hurt? What if the rogues did manage to kill Spottedstar? Is she okay? Most of all, what if I didn't bring enough cats to help?* She shook out her pelt. There was nothing she could've done about the last thought.

Cobrastrike caught up to her, wind streaming through his fur. "Don't worry, Mintpaw. Your Clanmates are warriors! They'll find a way to hold up."

Mintpaw nodded. "I hope so."

The patrol burst into camp, Sharpfur at the lead. The fighting never ceased as the FireClan backup jumped into the battle. Cobrastrike jumped onto the nearest cat that he could see, his claws digging into the rogue's pelt. Viperfang reared upwards, delivering a blow to another rogue's head.

Mintpaw weaved through the crowd. There was nothing more she could do. She could only hope that they would be able to fight off the rogues. Thankfully, though, she noticed that there seemed to be less rogues in the camp. Perhaps her Clanmates had managed to

fight some off.

She darted through the cats, trying her best to avoid claws and teeth. As she bounded through the fighting cats, trying to make her way to the medicine den, she caught sight of Snowfrost and Spottedstar. The two she-cats were reared up, back to back, fending off three rogues. They seemed to be losing. The golden she-cat looked weak, practically leaning against Snowfrost while trying to strike out some blows. Panic seized the tabby. *Did Spottedstar lose a life?*

The scene looked desperate. Spottedstar was slumped against the white she-cat, having no energy to prop herself up, and Snowfrost was struggling with keeping her leader on her paws while fighting off the rogues. And she looked tired as well after all that fighting.

The scene looked so bad that it made Mintpaw's paws itch, wanting to step forward and help. Yet she probably would only make the situation worse. Suddenly, a streak of white-and-black shot through the cats. *Adderclaw!* Her brother zoomed towards them, leaping on a rogue who was swiping at Snowfrost's paws. His claws hooked into the rogue's pelt as he pulled her off, throwing her away before turning on the other attackers.

"Mintpaw!" Echoleaf's voice ripped through the air, louder than the yowls. "Come here, hurry!"

The gray tabby spun towards her mentor's voice. A silver rogue was charging towards her, her blue eyes narrowed into splits. Mintpaw managed a dodge before bounding towards the medicine den as quickly as possible, the she-cat right on her tail. The tabby lunged into the narrow entrance as Windstrike delivered a fierce blow to the she-cat's nose, making her back off.

"Thank StarClan you're alright!" Echoleaf meowed.

Mintpaw sat on her hunches, panting. "Yeah. Sorry it took so long to fetch help."

Her mentor bowed her head. "It was alright. I imagine that Tigerstar was hard to persuade."

Before Mintpaw could respond, little voices came from the back of the den.

"I want to help!"

"Me, too!"

Amusement filled the gray tabby as she looked towards the owner of the voices. It was Grassfeather's kits. The brown-and-white queen looked tired as she tugged her kits towards her belly. "No."

"Why not?" the brown she-kit with purple-blue eyes squeaked. "We're three moons old! We're almost apprentices!"

"*Almost*, Violetkit," Grassfeather mewed wearily. "You're not there yet."

The brown tom-kit besides Violetkit twitched his pelt eagerly. "I know some battle moves! Ravenflight taught some to me yesterday!"

"Oh, did he, Duskkit?"

Mintpaw felt a swirl of sympathy for the queen. She must be exhausted and worried out of her mind. The gray tabby padded towards her. "Here, I can watch Violetkit and Duskkit if you want."

Grassfeather bowed her head. "Thank you." She blinked at her kits. "Mintpaw's going to watch you now."

The kits seemed more than delighted to meet a new cat, for they bounced over instantly, their fluffy pelts bristled with excitement. Mintpaw felt a purr rise in her throat as they danced around her paws. "Hello."

"Hi!" Violetkit squeaked. "I'm Violetkit, and this is Duskkit."

Duskkit nodded eagerly. "Do you want to play? Graywhisker's already told us so many stories!"

"Yeah," Violetkit chimed.

"Hey!" Graywhisker grumped, pretending to be upset. "I can hear you!"

"Don't be mad," Violetkit purred. "They're still great stories."

Mintpaw twitched her tail-tip with amusement, gazing around at the den. Echoleaf and Windstrike were at the entrance, ready to bob any rogues' nose with their unsheathed claws if needed. Mousepelt was asleep, her tail swishing uneasily. This made Mintpaw realize how long the battle had lasted as Graywhisker settled down besides her. Grassfeather looked too worried to sleep, but she laid down, blinking outside of the den. It was up to her to entertain the kits. "What do you want to do, then?"

"Let's play mouse and cat!" Duskkit meowed. "We'll be the hunters, and your tail will be the mouse!"

Mintpaw's whiskers twitched with amusement. "Okay." She let her tail lay still on the ground, listening as Violetkit and Duskkit crept up on it. Suddenly, she twitched, and felt as the two kits jumped at her tail, their tiny claws scraping at the "mouse".

As they continued to play, Mintpaw couldn't help but feel her pelt twitch with impatience. She loved playing with Violetkit and Duskkit, but she wanted to be doing something to help with the battle! She wasn't an elder or a queen! There was no need to just sit inside the den! Even Echoleaf was guarding the entrance. Perhaps she could help, but she noticed that Windstrike seemed eager to keep herself busy, too. And if Mintpaw joined them, then it would be too crowded at the entrance. She hated this useless feeling.

Finally, a victorious yowl rose from the clearing. The tabby's heart thumped. Had they won? Or did the rogues take over? However, from a simple glance at Echoleaf and Windstrike's expression, she could tell that AirClan had won the battle. Her pelt fluffed proudly.

"Come on!" Echoleaf blinked at Mintpaw. "We need to go help treat our Clanmates wounds!"

Mintpaw nodded, leaping out into the clearing after her mentor. Finally, she could be useful! As she bounded outside, her heart

dropped as she gazed around the camp. The dens were basically all destroyed. Pieces of bracken and scraps of moss lay scattered on the ground. Branches were everywhere and fallen leaves littered the floor. Dirt was kicked up and dens were collapsed. Only the medicine den looked intact. All her Clanmates looked tired and were covered with several wounds.

In the center of the camp, Spottedstar was speaking to Sharpfur, thanking FireClan for their help. The golden she-cat looked so weak that she swayed on her paws, threatening to collapse at any moment. Mintpaw recalled Flame's words, about helping Mamba attack Spottedstar. The gray tabby shivered. Whoever Mamba was, she certainly didn't want to ever meet them.

"We really appreciate FireClan's help," Spottedstar was meowing, her eyes tired. "We'll have our medicine cats treat you before you leave."

Sharpfur nodded stiffly. "Thank you."

Mintpaw darted back into the medicine den to grab the herbs. Nosing through the storage, she snatched up a bundle of cobwebs, marigold, goldenrod, and poppy seeds. When she returned, she and Echoleaf worked quickly to apply the herbs onto the FireClan cats' pelts. While Echoleaf worked on Briarmist, Mintpaw pressed a wad of cobwebs into Cobrastrike's flank, where he had a particularly nasty wound running. Blood soaked into the webs easily, and she pulled them away.

"How'd you get that?" Mintpaw mewed as she lapped at the wound to clean it before pressing another wad of cobwebs into it. She chewed up some goldenrod and applied the poultice onto the wound.

Cobrastrike flinched at the herb. "I was fighting a black she-cat," he meowed. "I don't think I know her name, but she was definitely the leader."

Mintpaw shivered. She had a good guess who the she-cat was. Probably the one that she'd seen that night before the Gathering. She still have flashbacks about the black she-cat's gaze boring into

hers. It sent a shiver down her spine.

"Mintpaw?" Cobrastrike prompted, snapping the tabby back into the future.

"Oh- sorry." Mintpaw returned to treating Cobrastrike's wounds. Their conversations continued with more light-hearted topics. The gray tabby really enjoyed spending time with the FireClan tom. She wished that they were able to hang out more. But, unfortunately, they didn't share a border, so she couldn't just bump into him as she did with Leafwhisker and Cloverpaw.

Finishing up with the poultice, she wrapped the wound with cobwebs, before moving on to Viperfang. The gray-and-white she-cat's eyes had sparkled with a rage of emotions as she watched while Cobrastrike and Mintpaw talked. There was amusement - perhaps from listening to their conversations - and an emotion that made her look as though she was torn between both thoughts, although Mintpaw couldn't possibly begin to guess what they were.

Far too soon, the FireClan patrol had to leave. With another diplomatic thanks and making sure that Sharpfang would pass that on to Tigerstar, Spottedstar watched as they disappeared. Mintpaw stood besides the golden she-cat, watching as Cobrastrike's tail vanished in the bushes. A tired sigh emitted from her as she turned around and padded back into the camp. There was a lot of work to be done.

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Word Count // 1695

Not Edited

Hi! I know this chapter is pretty much a filler chapter. So now, I'm thinking, should I have some more filler chapters then jump into the future, or should I just straightforwardly jump? I think the filler chapters might make the transition smoother, so I might do that, but I'm not sure. I'll try to make them as interesting as possible, though! Ack, yeah, it's probably going to be the filler chapter option- Well, I'll get working on those.

The picture at the top is Violetkit and Duskkit. Bye!

Chapter 25

[image]

The dark night splashed onto the forest as Echoleaf and Mintpaw slipped through the trees. The bright shine of stars and silver moon contrasted greatly against the black ink color as cloud floated through the sky. It looked to be just a normal half-moon meeting night. However, both medicine cats were more tense.

There was less chatter of excitement as the patrol made their way towards the Gathering clearing. Mintpaw's pelt was ruffled uneasily, casting nervous glances over her shoulder, wondering if she was going to catch sight of a flash of a rogue's pelt. She could tell her mentor was feeling the same way, for she seemed to be jumping, startled, at every crack of twig and leaf. And, especially, since they were both medicine cats, they were pretty much doomed if the rogues attacked them.

After the rogues' attack, there was much to do. There were cats to heal, dens to build, herbs to collect, and they still had to patrol the territory. Much of the herbs were trampled on, and it was hard to find any that were useable. Thankfully, the medicine den had been guarded, but there weren't enough herbs to heal every cat. Because most of the dens had collapsed, the elders, queen, and kits moved into the medicine den. The others set up nests outside in the clearing. Mintpaw and Echoleaf joined their Clanmates there. There wasn't much else of an option until the dens were rebuilt.

On top of that, most of the prey had been scared away because of the yowling. Most cats went to sleep hungry, having had just enough prey to keep themselves going. Although the rogues didn't seem like much of a threat, they had greatly impacted AirClan.

As though things weren't bad enough, Echoleaf had pulled Mintpaw out of earshot from their Clanmates soon after the battle, informing her that Spottedstar had indeed lost a life. The gray tabby remembered how her pelt had rippled with shock and horror. Had the rogues truly been that powerful? What could they possibly have

against the Clans? Why were they attacking them? All her questions had remained unanswered, and perhaps that was for the best.

"Hopefully StarClan will be able to give us information on what to do next." Echoleaf's voice startled Mintpaw out of her thoughts. The gray she-cat was staring wistfully at the sky. The moon glowed down at them. "AirClan needs to heal, and fast."

The gray tabby nodded. "How many lives does Spottedstar have left?" That was what she was most worried about. The golden she-cat still seemed weak, even though it had been some time after the attack.

Echoleaf paused, her tail-tip twitching with unease. "Two," she mewed, and Mintpaw felt her fur bristle. She hadn't realized that the leader only had so little.

The two continued their journey to the Moonpool in silence. Neither cat spoke, both seeming tense and deep in thought. Mintpaw exhaled. Hopefully StarClan will have some advice to offer.

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The other medicine cats were already there by the time the two AirClan cats arrived. The news of the rogue attack hadn't yet been passed out, but the other Clans must've heard something. But, it seems that they didn't, for only Nightstrike offered a sympathetic blink. However, Mintpaw noticed a new ginger tom, younger than she and Cloverpaw, standing besides Ravenleaf.

After the greetings were over, Ravenleaf stood up. "This is my new apprentice, Foxpaw," she announced, her fur fluffed with excitement. Mintpaw wondered if the ginger tom was her first ever apprentice.

The black she-cat then stepped towards the Moonpool, reciting the sacred words that introduced the new medicine apprentices to StarClan, as Echoleaf had done for Mintpaw. When that ritual was over, the medicine cats leaned down, dipping their noses into the Moonpool. The gray tabby hurried to follow, hoping that she could

exchange a few words with Foxpaw after.

The gray tabby leaned down, lapping a few drops of the clear, cool water. Instantly, she felt her body slump as she was sucked into a dream.

When Mintpaw opened her eyes, she was inside an unfamiliar forest. Trees dipped downwards, their branches swaying calmly with the gentle breeze. Leaves fluttered around, sometimes floating gracefully towards the ground. The air was thick with scents of prey. The grass was lush under the she-cat's paws, and she felt a calm feeling wash over her. She would be happy to stay here forever. It was so peaceful. For a moment, she didn't even care where she was. She was just glad that StarClan hadn't sent her another mist dream.

Suddenly, low voices caught her attention. The tabby's pelt pricked with unease as she tried figuring out where it had come from. As the voices grew louder and louder, realization dawned on her. The voices were coming towards her! Mintpaw suddenly felt an urge to hide. Swiftly, she leaped into the bushes besides her, just as the undergrowth rustled and three cats pushed their way into the clearing. The tabby breathed a sigh of relief. They hadn't seen her.

Peeking her head through the leaves, she caught sight of a small white tom. Recognition flowed through her. It was Cloudpool! The three cats' eyes were all dimmed with worry, their pelts twitching with unease, stomping their paws anxiously. Stars rippled through their fur. Mintpaw suddenly realized where she was. She was in StarClan's forest. The gray tabby angled her ears, trying to catch what the cats were talking about.

"What should we do?" Cloudpool was mewing, his voice twisted with worry. "The visions are piecing together!"

Besides him, a brown-and-white she-cat with blue eyes ruffled her fur. "We haven't had a vision about the rogues," she reminded him. "And besides, if we had, what could we have told them? That the rogues are bad? They aren't mice! They've figured that out pretty well themselves, haven't they? There was no way to stop the rogue attack."

Cloudpool nodded. "You're right, Skymist, but I just wish there was something we could do instead of watching helplessly."

"We've done all we can," a ginger-colored tom meowed. "We've sent all the visions we could to them! There's no knowledge that we can offer." His amber eyes flashed with defeat. "We can't even see what changes the future so suddenly into such a bloody one." His pelt twitched. "All we can see is the fighting and blood that lies ahead."

His words fell into silence.

Mintpaw pricked her ears. A bloody future? Why were they so focused on the rogue attack? What could that have brought? Why was that even a topic in the conversation? Her tail-tip twitched. The rogue attack couldn't have been that important, could it?

Skymist ruffled her pelt. "Maybe another vision will be sent to us soon," she offered. However, despite her words, there didn't seem to be much hope in her eyes. "Foxclaw, have you seen anything?"

The ginger tom shook his head. "Nothing but the last vision, the one with Leafwhisker and Cobrastrike, the one about the kits. The alternative future."

"Maybe that alternative future will happen instead," Cloudpool mewed hopefully.

Suddenly, Skymist's tail lashed with frustration. "I don't understand why there's no more visions!" Her voice was strained with worry, anger, and frustration. Layers and layers of emotions shone in her tone. "How are we supposed to guide the Clans with the little information that we have? Are we just supposed to sit here, knowing that there's a bloody future ahead, and not do anything about it?"

Foxclaw touched his tail-tip to her shoulder. "We've done all we could."

Skymist dropped her head. "I know," she meowed softly. "I just wish that there could be a vision about the rogues. You all saw how dangerous they are, and now AirClan's seen it, too! They've

interacted! You all have seen in the visions about the affect they'll have on the future!"

"But there's nothing," Cloudpool meowed. "There's nothing more that we can do, either. We'll just have to wait and hope that another vision will come."

Foxclaw shuffled his paws. "Well, I'll go greet Ravenleaf's new apprentice, Foxpaw. We are kin, after all. Perhaps he'd like to meet who he was named after."

Shock flared through Mintpaw. Foxclaw was a WaterClan cat, not a AirClan one? Then why was he so hung up in prophecies that seemed to involve AirClan the most? Skymist had mentioned that AirClan and the rogues interacted, as though it was important! And, if anything, it should be FireClan or EarthClan, because of Leafwhisker and Cobrastrike! Realization dawned on her. Whatever the bloody future was, it impacted all the Clans.

Skymist dipped her head. "Ivyleaf's already greeting him," she meowed, "but you can go join them."

Foxclaw swished his tail, as though looking forward to something more cheerful. With a twitch of his pelt in farewell, he disappeared into the bushes, leaving Skymist and Cloudpool.

"I wonder," Skymist began, "if she even realizes that these visions are about herself. If she realizes what an important part she plays in this."

"I hope so." Cloudpool's voice was worried. "Otherwise those visions would've been sent for nothing."

Skymist opened her jaws in reply, but she suddenly stopped. Her brown-and-white pelt twitched suspiciously, and her gaze moved to where Mintpaw was hiding. The gray tabby froze. She'd been caught!

"Sorry," Mintpaw began quickly as she stepped out of the bushes. "I just-"

"You're not supposed to be here!" Cloudpool meowed, worried.

"Who let you in?"

Skymist's eyes narrowed. "You were spying!"

"I wasn't!" Okay, that was a lie, but under the brown-and-white she-cat's fierce gaze, Mintpaw couldn't help but feel afraid.

Cloudpool touched his tail-tip to his companion's pelt, perhaps in an attempt to calm her down, but it didn't work. Skymist leaped forward, her eyes swirling with rage. "What did you hear?"

"N-not much!" Mintpaw yelped. Again, lie.

"You're not supposed to be here." Skymist echoed Cloudpool's words. Her paws swiped out, slamming against Mintpaw. Not enough to hurt her, but enough to wake her up.

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Mintpaw gasped, lifting her head from the Moonpool. Most of the other medicine cats were still wrapped up in their dreams. Her mind whirled as thoughts flashed through it. Were the visions about her? The StarClan cats had mentioned how she'd played such an important role. Sure, they didn't mention her name, but she had received those visions, hadn't she? And, she understood Skymist's fury. She wouldn't like it if someone was spying on her, either. The StarClan cat must've been caught off guard. And, she was certainly worried, and anger was easy to release with those emotions.

The gray tabby shook her head. *Am I meant to stop the 'bloody future'? What am I supposed to do? I'm a medicine cat! I can't fight. And most importantly, what was Skymist going to say before she spotted me?*

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Word Count // 1790

Not Edited

Hi! Sorry for not posting in a while, and sorry for the long chapter. Any thoughts on Skymist? She's not going to be that important, but I'd still like to hear your thoughts! The picture

at the top is Cloudpool! Okay, bye!

Chapter 26

[image]

The late afternoon sunshine cast a golden glow on the camp as Mintpaw and Echoleaf trotted back from their herb-gathering session. The tabby was carrying a jawful of marigold and her mentor had goldenrods. Most of the AirClan cats were sprawled out in the clearing, back from the sunset patrol, sharing tongues and eating prey. The tabby brushed past Robinpaw and Flowershine as she made her way to the medicine den, her fur rippling.

The two medicine cats trotted into the den, dropping off their herbs. Echoleaf's orders arrived quickly and swiftly. "Here, grab some marigold, and go check on Crowfur," she meowed. "His wounds should be healing, but they might be infected." Her pelt twitched. "When you're done with that, please bring the elders some water. Robinpaw and you are the only apprentice now, so the two of you will have to do more duties."

Mintpaw bowed her head, feeling her already-weary paws droop, as though there was sand on top of them. After the battle, Echoleaf had kept her busy, barely giving her any rest time. After collecting herbs all afternoon, she was hoping for a break. However, things had to get done.

"Oh, and when you're done with that," her mentor mewed, "go grab some prey. It's a Gathering tonight."

Mintpaw had been so busy that she'd forgotten about that. And especially after the conversation that she'd witnessed from the half-moon meeting, she was anxious to see Cobrastrike. With a flick of her tail, she leaned down, grabbing the marigold, and trotted out of the den. A sigh exited her as her tired paws felt more energetic, and there was a spring in her step when she walked. The thought of seeing her friends always brought her more energy.

By the time Mintpaw ducked into the Gathering, she could see that AirClan was the last Clan to arrive. Her green gaze swept the clearing until it reached the usual spot that she and her friends sat at. Cloverpaw and Leafwhisker were there, but she didn't spot Cobrastrike. Disappointment weighed in her stomach as she padded over. Her FireClan friend probably had to stay at camp for this Gathering.

"Hi!" Cloverpaw greeted, her brown-and-white pelt ruffling with excitement.

"Hello!" Mintpaw mewed back, nudging her friend. She loved talking with Cloverpaw. The medicine cat apprentice was always so energetic and bright.

"You forgot my greeting!" Leafwhisker protested. Again with the playful teasing.

The gray tabby purred, forgetting about her weariness, and offered him a flick of his ears with her tail. "Well, you didn't greet me either, so I think it's fair."

Cloverpaw craned her head. "Where's Cobrastrike? Did he have to stay at camp today?"

The brown tom shrugged idly. "I suppose so."

Mintpaw couldn't help but feel a little put off by his tone. He sounded like he didn't care. Confusion rippled through her. *Doesn't he want to talk with Cobrastrike, too? After all, they are friends. What had happened?* She shook off the thought. *They've probably spoken plenty of times at the border, so he's not that upset by his absence.*

"So, how are things going in your Clan?" Cloverpaw prompted. The question was clearly directed towards Mintpaw, for she and Leafwhisker were in the same Clan.

The tabby ruffled her pelt. *Should I tell them about the rogue attack? No, Spottedstar will do that if she wants to announce it.* "It's going okay. We're low on apprentices, so me and Robinpaw have to do most of the duties. I hope Violetkit and Duskkit become apprentices

soon. They're so cute! I love playing with them! They're very bright, too. They'd make great warriors or medicine cats."

Cloverpaw eyed Mintpaw teasingly. "Wow, you'd make a great mother! I'm sure you'll take great care of your Clan."

The gray tabby huffed, flicking her friend's pelt. "Mouse-brain," she muttered affectionately.

Leafwhisker's pelt rippled. He probably didn't understand the medicine cat jokes, and passed both Cloverpaw and Mintpaw a confused look.

"Cloverpaw!" Rainpool's voice travelled towards them. "Echoleaf wants to talk to you. Come over here."

Confusion washed through Mintpaw. Why would her mentor want to speak with an apprentice of another Clan? She got to her paws. Should she go, too? However, Echoleaf waved her away. With a puzzled expression, Cloverpaw padded over to the gray she-cat. The AirClan medicine cat wrapped her tail around the brown-and-white she-cat's shoulders and led her towards the edge of the crowd, where their words couldn't be heard.

Leafwhisker looked confused as well. "Isn't Echoleaf your mentor? Why would she want to talk with Cloverpaw?"

Mintpaw could only offer him a shrug. "I don't know." What could they be talking about?

"So," Leafwhisker began, his pelt giving off waves of nervousness, "I was wondering if you wanted to meet at the borders again."

The gray tabby blinked. "Meet at the borders again?" She wasn't sure if she could, since her Clan was so busy with the healings of the rogue attack.

"Yeah!" Leafwhisker mewed, his voice excited. "We could go explore the forest again! We could talk with Luna. I've been visiting her in the past few days. She's a great cat to talk with."

The gray tabby felt an unusual feeling stirring in her stomach. For

some reason, she was upset that Leafwhisker had been seeing Luna. It wasn't jealousy, though. Not yet, at least. She shook out her pelt. *This is ridiculous. I'm a medicine cat, for StarClan's sake. I'm only feeling like this because I don't want Leafwhisker to break the Warrior Code.* However, even though she knew she shouldn't, her friend's story had made her agree. "Sure, then. It'll be fun."

The brown tom's eyes lit up instantly. "Great! Tomorrow at dawn?"

Mintpaw twitched her tail-tip. "Sure."

"The Gathering is starting!" Moonstar's voice rose over the chatter. Instantly, the cats fell silent, their gazes directed to the tree, where the four leaders were perched.

Tigerstar stepped forward to give the first report. Mintpaw almost gasped at the sight of him. He was so thin that she could see his ribs sticking out of his pelt. *What had happened? Is Cobrastrike okay?* Concern washed over her. "Prey is still running well in FireClan," he meowed. That seemed hard to believe, with the state that he was in. Looking around, she realized the other FireClan cats looked unfed, too. "One of our warriors, Stonestrike, has retired to the elder's den after moons of service. Another one of our warriors, Viperfang, is now dead."

Mintpaw felt shock strike her. Viperfang? Dead? She could barely process this. It had come so sudden! She was ready to cheer for Stonestrike, happy that he was able to relax, but Tigerstar had shot the second piece of information as though it was nothing. *Surely he's just pulling our tail. He doesn't even look sad that Viperfang's gone!* Her shock melted away into fury. The FireClan leader had announced it so casually, as though he was announcing that they had a new apprentice. *No, when he did announce new apprentices, he put a lot more effort into that. He didn't say it as though it was just something to check off his to-do list.* Her paws tingled. *No cat deserves that little appreciation.*

Spottedstar stood up. Mintpaw leaned forward. *Is she going to say something in honors of Viperfang?* The gray tabby sure hoped so. Instead, her leader's words disappointed her. "Is she Fireclaw's descendant?"

The tabby almost wanted to yowl in frustration. A cat was dead! Why does it matter that she was Fireclaw's descendant? It was almost as though that defined her completely! Had Spottedstar forgotten that Viperfang had helped fight off the rogues?

Tigerstar nodded. "Yes."

The FireClan leader opened his jaws, about to continue. Mintpaw shot up. Surely he couldn't move on that quickly, no matter how much he hated Viperfang. "How did Viperfang die?" She didn't mean for her voice to come out shakily, but she couldn't help it. Although she'd spent only brief moments with the gray-and-white she-cat, she'd developed deep fondness for her.

Tigerstar blinked down coldly at her, recognizing her from when she'd asked for help. "If you must know, she died from a dog," he meowed.

Mintpaw wanted to say more. She wanted to make them care, although she knew she couldn't do it. No matter her ancestor, Viperfang had faithfully served FireClan for many moons. That had to count as something. The gray tabby plopped herself back down as the Gathering continued, a blur of emotions running through her.

"Are you okay?" Leafwhisker's tail brushed her pelt. "Why do you care so much about a Fireclaw descendant?"

Mintpaw's eyes flashed. She hadn't realized she was wearing a scowl and her pelt was bristled, but she didn't want to make herself look calm. "I'm fine," she mewed, as evenly as possible. "And I care about Viperfang because she's nice. She's not just a Fireclaw descendant, you know? She's a loyal and brave warrior and Cobrastrike's mother! No cat deserves that little appreciation when they die!"

At her words, she froze. *Cobrastrike...* If Mintpaw was feeling this upset at Viperfang's death, she couldn't imagine what her friend felt. Suddenly, she wanted to see him even more than ever, to make sure that he was okay.

"One more thing," Tigerstar continued, as though nothing has happened, "Cobrastrike is now exiled from our Clan for attacking

and killing one of our warriors."

The gray tabby felt as though ice was spreading through her body. Cobrastrike? Exiled? He killed one of FireClan's warriors? No, that can't be true.

"We've always waited for him to show violence," Tigerstar continued smugly. "Now we know that he's the cat we've always thought he was. A true, evil descent of Fireclaw. I'm afraid he couldn't accept his mother's death properly and took all his rage out on another cat." He shook his head sadly. "However, there is one thing to celebrate: We finally got rid of all of Fireclaw's descendants."

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Word Count // 1645

Not Edited

Hi! I know there's quite a lot in this chapter, but I really wanted to kind of move things along, because it's already Chapter 26 and Mintpaw's not even close to evil. This book is going to be pretty lengthy. Right, so, poor Viperfang and Cobrastrike. Any thoughts on Tigerstar? I don't like him very much, you? He's at the top, by the way. Okay, bye!

Chapter 27

[image]

Mintpaw was frozen in shock. The news had been thrown at her so wildly, right after announcing Viperfang's death. Her tabby fur was ruffled. *Cobrastrike? Exiled? Surely there's a mistake. I must have heard wrong.* The gray tabby glanced sideways at Cloverpaw. Her friend's green eyes were wide with surprise, shock, and sadness, crashing down on her.

"We ask that if any Clan finds Cobrastrike on their land, they chase him out instantly," Tigerstar meowed. "I'm afraid that he's still wandering around our borders."

The other Clan leaders exchanged a glance. Although it was clear that they didn't like Fireclaw's descendants any more than FireClan did, they didn't want to be taking orders from Tigerstar.

"It's for the best, for all the Clans," Tigerstar promised.

"Okay," Spottedstar mewed, hesitantly. The other leaders echoed her words, their pelts bristled.

Mintpaw's paws itched. There seemed to be no more point in the Gathering. She was feeling a devastating grief for Viperfang and Cobrastrike. Would she ever even see her friend again? She didn't know. Panic and desperation seized her. She didn't want to lose Cobrastrike. Suddenly, a terrifying thought flashed through her mind.

The rogues' camp are by FireClan's territory, and if Cobrastrike was exiled, I doubt he will have travelled up to EarthClan and AirClan's lands... Mintpaw's pelt twitched. *He's by the rogues! He could be in danger!*

Cloverpaw didn't seem to realize this. Her gaze was still saddened, not worried. Leafwhisker's was completely unreadable.

Mintpaw shivered. Her paws itched, wanting to get out of the Gathering as quickly as possible and check on Cobrastrike. She wanted to make sure that he was okay!

The rest of the Gathering seemed to go by painfully slow. Mintpaw's tail swished with impatience and worry. The other cats had moved on from the news as though a dead cat and an exiled warrior was nothing! Moonstar was now giving a report on how prey was running well, and Mintpaw couldn't help but find that completely uninteresting and unneeded. She couldn't understand how the leaders were able to move on so calmly and normally.

Finally, the Gathering was at a close. Mintpaw shot to her paws as cats moved around, beginning to share tongues. Leafwhisker turned to her, confused. "Is everything okay?"

The gray tabby blinked at him in shock. "What? You heard Tigerstar's announcement! Aren't you worried about Cobrastrike?"

Leafwhisker shrugged. "Yeah, but Cobrastrike did *kill* a cat. Why are you so worried for him?"

The question made Mintpaw pause. Leafwhisker had a point. Cobrastrike had killed one of his Clanmates. But somehow, she didn't believe that he'd done it simply out of the pain of loosing Viperfang. There had to have been some other reasoning behind that. It just didn't make sense that he would take his anger out randomly on one of his Clanmates! And, sure, she didn't agree with what he did, but if he was hurt so badly that he'd killed a cat, she wanted to check up on him.

"If Viperfang's death cause him so much pain that he'd killed a cat, then I want to make sure he's okay," Mintpaw replied, twitching her tail-tip. She'd barely spoken to Viperfang and felt deep grief for the gray-and-white she-cat's death. She couldn't imagine what Cobrastrike was feeling. "Besides, who knows what he'll do. He might just keep killing cats in grief." She didn't believe that last part, but it seemed enough to convince Leafwhisker.

Mintpaw bounded towards Echoleaf, trying to come up with an excuse in her mind to leave. Cloverpaw and Echoleaf seemed to be

finished with their conversation, and the brown-and-white she-cat sat by herself to one side, perhaps wrapped up in whatever she and the AirClan medicine cat were talking about or Tigerstar's announcements.

Mintpaw felt a twinge of jealousy that Echoleaf had shared something with Cloverpaw and not herself. She was Echoleaf's apprentice after all, not Cloverpaw! However, that was small to what was on her mind at the moment.

The gray tabby rushed towards her mentor. "Hey, Echoleaf! I just remembered that we were low on marigold, and Riverfrost had a really nasty cut on his flanks. I thought that I'd go out and collect more right now." As soon as she blurted out the excuse, she felt like kicking herself. What she had said was correct, but it made no sense that she'd want to go collect the herb right now.

Clearly, Echoleaf thought so, because her eyes narrowed. "Right now? It's almost moon-high."

"Yeah, well, I got this sudden urge," Mintpaw meowed awkwardly, "and we might be too busy tomorrow to do it. Also, the weather is changing quickly. It'll be leaf-fall soon." Again, her excuses were stupid.

Echoleaf blinked. "This is about Cobrastrike, isn't it? You were friends with him, right?"

Mintpaw felt her gut twist. Her mentor's expression was serious, making her think that Echoleaf was going to give her a lecture on this. Her expression seemed to give Echoleaf the answer that she was looking for.

"He's a bad influence," Echoleaf meowed softly. "You heard what Tigerstar had said, he killed a cat! But, I know you still must be upset that you lost a friend. I understand if you want to go take a walk in the forest or something, and clear your mind. Just return to the camp by moon-high and beware of the rogues."

"Okay!" Mintpaw didn't bother processing her mentor's words, about Cobrastrike being a bad influence and whatnot. From all the times

she'd talked to the tom, he'd been as kind as could be. All she cared about was that Echoleaf was letting her leave. Turning around, she bounded out of the Gathering, waving a hurried goodbye to Cloverpaw and Leafwhisker.

The night air seemed cooler somehow as the gray tabby burst out of the clearing. There was no hesitation in her movements as she spun around, bounding towards FireClan's territory.

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"Cobrastrike?" Mintpaw's voice echoed into the darkness of the trees. She'd left FireClan's borders behind some time ago, and was now wandering in the woods. She could still vaguely smell the border, so she wasn't lost. However, there was no sign of her friend. She could feel her throat practically closing with desperation. She couldn't even remember the last time she'd seen Cobrastrike. A moon ago? Longer? She hadn't even gotten the chance to say goodbye.

"Cobrastrike!" Mintpaw called again, louder, her fur rippling. One more try, and then she'd head back to camp. She really hoped she would find him.

Suddenly, the rogue scents drifted in her jaws, making her freeze in her tracks. Terror filled every bone of her body, unable to move. *You mouse-brain! You might've just walked into the rogues' camp!* However, that made her worry for Cobrastrike grow. Was he okay from the rogues?

All of a sudden, a tail wrapped around her shoulder. Mintpaw let out a silent yowl of panic, trying to struggle away, thrashing. Horror filled her. It could be a rogue. She didn't know. As the mysterious cat dragged her into a bush, she was suddenly released.

"You mouse-brain!" a familiar voice mewed, soft. "You could've alerted the rogues about where we were!"

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Word Count // 1184

Not Edited

Hi! Sorry for not posting for a couple of days. Honestly, I was having trouble writing this chapter. A writing block, I guess. I think it's over now, though, thankfully. Anyway, it's almost summer break for me! Updates might be slower following that, because I'll be spending most of my time with friends and family. Still, I'll do my best to continue the book! Okay, who do you think the cat is? Personally I think it's pretty obvious, but... Tell me your guesses! Okay, bye!

Chapter 28

[image]

Mintpaw turned around, her gaze meeting a pair of familiar eyes. Cobrastrike blinked back at her. Excitement blurred through the gray tabby. She'd found him! He was alright! "Cobrastrike!" She threw herself at the tom, purring. "You're okay!"

Cobrastrike blinked, shuffling his paws, waving his tail as a sign, telling her to soften her voice. After all, the rogues were nearby. "Of course. But what are *you* doing here?"

"Checking up on you! Tigerstar announced the news at the Gathering tonight," Mintpaw mewed, quieter this time.

"Oh." Cobrastrike glanced up at the sky. "I didn't realize that the Gathering was tonight. I guess I lost track of time."

Mintpaw blinked. "How long have you been exiled?" She'd assumed that it had been close to the time of the Gathering, but now that she thought about it, he could've been out by himself for the whole moon before Tigerstar had announced it.

"Around half a moon," Cobrastrike replied, pushing himself onto his paws. "That's when Viperfang died."

Mintpaw froze, her pelt twitching with sympathy. "I'm sorry about your mother." She brushed her pelt against his, watching as his gaze flashed with grief.

"Do you want to know how she died?" Cobrastrike's voice was cracked. Mintpaw had never seen him like this before. Normally he was strong, and never let anything get to him. But, he had just lost his mother. The gray tabby couldn't even begin to imagine what her life would be like without Snowfrost.

"Tigerstar said that a dog killed her?" Mintpaw didn't want to make him talk about it if he was upset.

"That's not false," Cobrastrike mewed, "but not true, either. What else did he tell you? Why was I exiled?"

"Because you killed a cat?" Mintpaw twitched her tail-tip as Cobrastrike sat down again.

"Again, not false but it's not the full story." The tom nodded at a mound of dirt besides a tree. "Do you see that?"

"Yeah?"

"That's where they buried Viperfang." Cobrastrike's pelt bristled. "They didn't even bury her body inside the territory. That's why I didn't want to stray too far." The grief in his voice turned to anger. "Here's how she actually died, Mintpaw. Yes, it was from a dog, but you know what else? The cat that I killed? He was there, *watching* as the dogs attacked Viperfang, not doing anything. He told Tigerstar that he'd witnessed the entire thing from the top of a tree, safe. He could've helped save Viperfang, but he was a fox-hearted cat. Now, Viperfang's dead."

"Oh..." Mintpaw felt anger and grief stirring in her belly. What Clanmate would sit by and watch their Clanmate get attacked by a dog? And even more, who would come back and proudly report that they'd done nothing? "That's horrible."

Cobrastrike nodded. "And Tigerstar decided it was okay because they were outside of the territory. He said that it was Viperfang's fault, because if she stayed in the safe-guarded territory, she wouldn't have gotten hurt. But the only reason Viperfang was outside the territory was to find prey, since the rogues stole most of it."

Mintpaw's mind flashed back to how unfed all the FireClan cats had looked at the Gathering. Fury fueled her stomach. Viperfang had tried helping her Clan! "That's so unfair."

Cobrastrike bowed his head. "And they didn't even bother burying her inside the territory." He pushed himself to his paws. "If that cat had helped Viperfang, she might still be alive."

The gray tabby scrambled up as well. Cobrastrike's attack hadn't solely been based off of grief, but anger and revenge, too. And she agreed with him. If some cat had stepped by and watched while Snowfrost was being attacked, she'd gladly give that cat the same treatment.

The words fell into silence. Neither cat spoke for a while as the dark night loomed over them. Mintpaw glanced up at the sky. The moon was high already. She should be getting back to camp.

"Well, thanks for visiting me," Cobrastrike meowed, breaking the silence. "I made a den around here, so if you ever want to come visit again, you know where to find me."

Mintpaw scrambled up. She couldn't let him stay out here alone! What if he gets hurt from the rogues? "Wait, Cobrastrike, maybe if you explain to Tigerstar, then you can rejoin FireClan! Or, you could join AirClan. I'm sure Spottedstar will be able to-"

"No, Mintpaw." Cobrastrike rose up as well. He'd grown. A lot. He completely loomed over her now, his tail-tip twitching, his gaze almost threatening. If any other cat saw him, they might be terrified, but the gray tabby knew him well enough. He would never hurt her, she knew that. "Don't you see why Viperfang was treated so unfairly? It's because she's Fireclaw's descendant. There's no way that Tigerstar or Spottedstar would let me join their Clan. I'm Fireclaw's descendant too. Tigerstar would never treat any of his other cats in this way."

Mintpaw gulped, thinking of how Tigerstar had *celebrated* that Fireclaw's descendants were gone. In a way, he was celebrating the exile and death of two cats.

"Tigerstar and FireClan were terrified that me and Viperfang would continue Fireclaw's horrors," Cobrastrike meowed darkly. "Fireclaw treated his cats unfairly based on something they couldn't control. Now, FireClan's acting that way to *me*." The tom snorted. "They were so afraid that they became the thing they feared the most. How pathetic."

Mintpaw stared at him, no words forming. Cobrastrike *had* changed.

The grief and anger from Viperfang's death had changed him greatly. Now, she could see a want of revenge sparkling in his eyes. Part of her was nervous, but the other part *agreed* with him.

Perhaps the nervous part was showing through, because Cobrastrike took a step back, his gaze gentle and apologetic. "Sorry about that." Okay, so maybe he hadn't changed *that* much.

Mintpaw shook her head. "No, it's fine. I'm just surprised." She nodded towards FireClan's border. "I need to get going now. Echoleaf will be looking for me."

Cobrastrike looked as though he wanted to say something, then nodded. "Okay."

"I'll visit you again soon." The gray tabby touched her nose swiftly with her friend's, before turning around, bounding towards the Clan territory. She was careful to keep her paw steps light, not wanting to alert the rogues. Moonlight beamed on her path as she bounded along, her tail streaming out behind her. Cobrastrike had changed. For the better or the worse, she didn't know.

Her mind flashed to moons and moons ago, when she'd first caught sight of Cobrastrike. That night, she'd made a promise to herself. A promise that she'd help Leafwhisker. A promise that she'd protect him from Cobrastrike. All this had been based on her dream, one of Cobrastrike striking down Leafwhisker. Now, as she reflected against that, the future was even more complicated than she could've dreamed of. She couldn't even begin to imagine why Cobrastrike would want to hurt Leafwhisker. And, if she had to, could she even fight against her friends?

A sigh exited her as she continued to run. Her shadow flickered through the woods as she weaved between trees, reaching AirClan's territory. So much of her life had changed already. She couldn't imagine what else the future had planned.

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Word Count // 1213

Not Edited

Hi! Here's another chapter. Not many important things happened in this one. Anyway, what do you think? How do you think the dreams will be combined? Any guesses? Okay, that's all. Bye!

1κ νιεωs!

[image]

Hi, Effie here! Wow, we're at 1k views already! Thank you so, so much for this! It's one of my goals and a huge milestone for me. I really appreciate this. Along with that, I wanted to say thanks for all the support on Mintpool's Promise! I love reading the comments and predictions that you wrote. Some of the comments are super funny, and the predictions are all super well thought-out. They're all so creative, and I love hearing your guesses!

Again, thanks so much for the support on Mintpool's Promise plus the 1k views! I'm super grateful! Have a wonderful week! Bye!

Chapter 29

[image]

Mintpaw's paw steps were soft as she padded alongside Echoleaf. The half-moon beamed down at them as the two medicine cats made the journey to the Moonpool once again. The forest was still, the night sky glittering with beautiful stars. Mintpaw's pelt twitched with excitement as she moved, eager to reach the Moonpool.

"Slow down, now," Echoleaf purred as the tabby bounced ahead.

"Sorry!" Mintpaw turned back, feeling as though she were an apprentice again, and that this was the first time that Echoleaf had brought her to the Moonpool. She couldn't even count the amount of times her mentor had to tell her to slow down. "I'm just really excited."

"Of course you are." Echoleaf's whiskers twitched fondly as she reached Mintpaw. "There would be an issue if you weren't."

Echoleaf had been hinting that Mintpaw would receive her full name soon in the past moon. This morning, finally, she'd informed her apprentice that tonight was the night. For the entire day, Mintpaw had been livid with excitement. Robinpaw, looking a little distasteful that the tabby would receive her full name before she did, seemed to attempt to bother Mintpaw even more. But she didn't care; nothing could have ruined her good mood.

The gray tabby nodded cheerfully. She couldn't wait to tell Cloverpaw, Cobrastrike, and Leafwhisker! An exciting thought flashed through her mind as Echoleaf continued on the trail. "Echoleaf!" she called as she bounded to her mentor's side. "Will Cloverpaw receive her full name, too?" *It would be so cool if me and her got our names on the same night!*

Echoleaf blinked thoughtfully. "Perhaps. She's certainly old enough, and there's no point in making her wait any longer. Rainpool didn't speak anything of this to us, though. But, there is a good chance."

Mintpaw nodded cheerfully again. She set off on the trail, bounding towards the Moonpool, stopping every once in a while to wait for Echoleaf to catch up. Tonight, especially, her mentor seemed to walk especially slow. Finally, the glittering pool was before them. The gray tabby launched herself down the steps, joining Cloverpaw at the bottom. Nightstrike and Ravenleaf still had yet to arrive.

"Guess what?" Cloverpaw mewed as Mintpaw padded forward, her eyes dancing with excitement. "I'm getting my full name tonight!"

"Really? Me, too!" Mintpaw's tabby pelt bristled with excitement as she watched Cloverpaw's eyes light up with even more joy.

"Yay! We'll receive our names together!" Cloverpaw sat down, wrapping her tail neatly around her paws. Mintpaw joined her, willing that Ravenleaf and Nightstrike would show up soon. If she had to wait any longer, she felt as though she might burst. The two apprentices talked cheerily about what names they think they may get.

After what seemed like moons, Ravenleaf and Nightstrike's paw steps echoed through the air as they joined the rest of the medicine cats.

"Sorry for being late," Ravenleaf mewed. "I hear an apprentice is receiving her full warrior name?" Foxpaw swished his tail from besides her.

"Two, actually," Rainpool purred, trotting forward. "Shall we begin?"

Exchanging an eager look, Mintpaw and Cloverpaw stepped up to the Moonpool. Echoleaf and Rainpool glanced at each other, as though communicating through their minds, before Echoleaf stepped towards Mintpaw.

"I, Echoleaf, medicine cat of AirClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. She has trained hard to understand the ways of a medicine cat, and with your help she will serve her Clan for many moons." Echoleaf paused, her green eyes dancing, before continuing. Mintpaw's tail-tip flicked with

confusion. Was that uncertainty?

"Mintpaw, do you promise to uphold the ways of a medicine cat, to stand apart from rivalry between Clan and Clan and to protect all cats equally, even at the cost of your life?"

Having no time to think about what emotion that Echoleaf had shone, Mintpaw answered swiftly and confidently. "I do."

"Then by the powers of StarClan I give you your true name as a medicine cat. Mintpaw, from this moment you will be known as Mintpool. StarClan honors your kindness and intelligence, and we welcome you as a full medicine cat of AirClan."

Mintpool's heart beat with excitement. She was a full medicine cat now! Echoleaf's muzzle rested on her head as she gave her former mentor's shoulder a swift lick.

"Mintpool! Mintpool!" Her new name echoed through the air, cutting through the night. Cloverpaw's voice was the loudest, her yowl proud and bright. The only thing that Mintpool missed was Adderclaw and Snowfrost. She wished they could be here when she received her full name.

Rainpool repeated the process with Cloverpaw, giving her the name Cloverleaf.

Raising her head, Mintpool yowled her friend's new name as loudly as she could. "Cloverleaf! Cloverleaf!"

Finally, once the cheering died down, Echoleaf swished her tail. "It's time to share tongues with StarClan." She shot Mintpool a proud look.

Mintpool and Cloverleaf blinked at each other cheerfully, before dipping down their heads, lapping up a few drops. Almost instantly, the gray tabby could feel herself being tugged into the dream, wondering what StarClan was going to show her.

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Mintpool's paws landed firmly on the ground. She recognized the

lush green landscape instantly. She was in StarClan's hunting grounds! *I should get out of here, before Skymist or Cloudpool finds me...*

"No worries, Mintpool." Cloudpool's voice sounded behind her. "I've called you here tonight."

Mintpool turned around. "Cloudpool!" The small white tom stood in front of her, his fluffy white pelt shining under the moonlight.

"Welcome," Cloudpool meowed. "I thought I'd bring you here properly for once." His mew was wry as he continued. "Congratulations on your full name."

"Thank you!" Mintpool purred.

"Mintpool was an interesting choice," Cloudpool murmured, almost to himself. "I thought Echoleaf would have gone with Mintleaf, or Mintheart. Unless..."

Mintpool angled her ears, wondering if she heard him correctly. "Sorry, what?"

The StarClan cat shook his head. "It's nothing." It certainly didn't look like nothing. Cloudpool flicked his tail-tip. "Come along. I'll give you a tour."

Mintpool padded after him, her pelt twitching. *This is weird. Why's he giving me a tour of StarClan?*

The two were silent for a while, passing by no other cats. "What do you think of this place so far, Mintpool?" Cloudpool asked, not even nothing to turn around.

"Uh... it's nice," Mintpool mewed hesitantly. *What's the point of this? He hasn't even said anything!*

Finally, Cloudpool stopped by a pool. The waters were crystal clear, sparkles of blue and silver in them. "This is the Vision Pool," Cloudpool mewed. "It's where we go to visit dreams and see the future."

Mintpool stared at it. She longed to reach out a paw and touch the waters. It looked shimmery. *No- Mintpool- what are you thinking?*

Cloudpool watched her wryly. "You wanted to go inside, didn't you? Well, it's not an uncommon feeling, to want to go in. It leads to dreams, you know? Dreams that connect to living cats. Many cats, although happy in StarClan, miss their lives." He twitches his tail-tip. "But the Vision Pool's dangerous as well. It connects with the Dark Forest."

"The Dark Forest?" Mintpool's pelt twitched with worry. She'd heard of the Dark Forest before. It was where evil cats went. "What if they get into StarClan?"

"Oh, they can't," Cloudpool responded. "To them, it's just a vision pool, too. They go visit dreams and spread evil or whatever." He shuddered. "Thankfully, it doesn't work as well for them as it does us. But, if we wander in here too long, our spirits might just get sucked into the Dark Forest. That will never happen the other way around."

"Why are you showing me this?" Mintpool asked.

Cloudpool blinked at her. "I'm just warning you: be careful. It's a lot easier to get sucked into the dark side than it is to return to the light." He didn't let her get any words in. "It's probably time for you to head back."

"Oh. Okay." Mintpool couldn't help but feel that Cloudpool was rushing. "It was nice seeing you again."

"You, too," Cloudpool meowed quickly. "Congratulations again on your name. Remember, be careful." He thrust his muzzle towards her, and she jerked awake. The first thing that greeted Mintpool was the silvery moonlight, splashing down at her. Stars glittered in the night sky, almost as if it was repeating Cloudpool's warning. *Be careful.*

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Word Count // 1378

Not Edited

Hi! Here's another chapter! Yay for Mintpool! Any interpretations for what the warning means? Okay, that's all. Bye!

Chapter 30

[image]

Mintpool felt her paws thump against the forest ground as she bounded through the forest. As she bounded through AirClan's forest, she noticed that the lush green leaves were beginning to turn red and orange, making her heart twist. Leaf-bare would be here soon. Pushing that thought out of her mind, she continued the down the path towards EarthClan's borders.

Sure enough, Leafwhisker was waiting there for her. They'd planned this meeting at the Gathering. The brown tom's eyes lit up when he spotted her trot forward. "Hey, Mintpaw!"

Mintpool purred, twitching her whiskers. "It's Mint*pool* now," she corrected. "No more ordering me around as a warrior. I got my full name too."

"Congratulations." Leafwhisker sighed, pretending to be upset. "First Cloverleaf, now you."

Mintpool twitched her whiskers with amusement, before giving him an affectionate flick on the ears. Leafwhisker straightened, shaking off the teasing. "So, you ready to go?"

Mintpool blinked. She'd come to tell him that she *couldn't* go... she'd promised to visit Cobrastrike. She wanted to make sure he was doing alright. "I- sorry, Leafwhisker, but I don't think that I can go today."

Leafwhisker's pelt twitched. "Why not?"

"I'm sorry, but I want to check up on Cobrastrike," Mintpool mewed, shuffling her paws awkwardly. "Today's the only day I can. I've got loads of herb collecting and cats to take care of in the other days."

Her friend's green gaze grew hard. "But you promised me first, Mintpool!"

The tabby sighed. She had, but she just felt that Cobrastrike's situation was more important than sneaking off to play. But, Leafwhisker was right: she had agreed to him first. "Okay, then."

Instantly, the EarthClan tom brightened. "Great! Let's go!" He leaped to his paws. "Let's go visit Luna!" Spinning around, he zoomed up the hill.

Mintpool turned towards him, rather wearily, before hurrying after her friend. She used to be so excited whenever they went on adventures together. Now, she felt as though she'd rather do something else. It wasn't fair to Leafwhisker, she knows, but she didn't understand why he couldn't visit Luna without her. Checking on Cobrastrike just seemed so much more important.

Another sigh emitted from the tabby. It was going to be a long morning.

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Mintpool slipped through the trees as the sun began to fall. She'd finished all of her tasks, stealing just enough time to pay Cobrastrike a quick visit. Her paws were still sore from her morning. Leafwhisker had brought her to Luna, but, in her opinion, it had been really boring. The two had just talked about the best way to catch mice.

As Mintpool skittered towards the edges of FireClan's territory, as she always did, a heavy rogue scent flooded towards her, making her pelt prick with fear. The rogue scent seemed even stronger than normally. Picking up her pace to a run, she bounded towards Cobrastrike's den, her heart pounding, praying to StarClan that he was alright.

As she burst into the clearing, she spotted him instantly, right where he usually was. He was sitting in front of Viperfang's grave. As Mintpool glanced around, she noticed that he'd cleaned up the clearing nicely, making it look like a camp. A pile of prey was stocked onto one side. The tall grass seemed to be woven in some way to create walls, with an entrance. His den, even, was more sturdy-looking. She noticed that several other dens had been added,

too. Her pelt twitched, puzzled.

Thankfully, though, there was no rogue in sight. Mintpool trotted towards him, keeping her paw steps soft. "Cobrastrike?"

Her friend turned around. As soon as his gaze landed on her, his eyes brightened, and he leaped to his paws. "Mintpaw! Hi!"

Mintpool's whiskers twitched with amusement. "I'm Mintpool now!" she mewed brightly.

Cobrastrike's eyes widened, joy and pride sparkling in them. "That's great! Congratulations!" He leaned down, giving her ears an affectionate lick. "Mintpool is a beautiful name."

The tabby purred. "Thank you!" As her purrs grew louder, Cobrastrike joining in, from the corner of her eye, she saw the bushes rustling. Her purrs stopped, her pelt bristled.

Cobrastrike blinked. "Mintpool, what's wrong?"

Mintpool didn't have time to answer before a familiar black head shoved themselves into the clearing. Fear froze every bone in her body. It was the cat that she'd seen the night of that Gathering! The cat who seemed pleased at her fear! The cat who'd attacked Spottedstar. "Cobrastrike-" Her voice faltered.

The black she-cat's green eyes sparkled with cruelty. She looked amused at Mintpool's fear. She slid out her claws, long and sharp. She was right in the clearing! Mintpool couldn't believe that Cobrastrike still didn't notice her!

"What is it?" Cobrastrike tilted his head, confused, as the rogue crouched down. Before the gray tabby could get another word out, the rogue sprang towards the tom.

Mintpool couldn't even keep her eyes on the rogue - she was too fast. Within a split second, just a flash of black fur, she'd leaped towards Cobrastrike. The gray tabby didn't even have time to yowl out a warning. Fear pounded inside her. She felt as though ice had washed through her. She tried to get herself to move, to say or yowl anything, but she just couldn't do it.

Paws thumped on the ground. Mintpool blinked, shocked. The rogue hadn't attacked Cobrastrike after all. She had landed besides him, not on top of him. The gray tabby's paws were still quivering as she saw Cobrastrike glance at the black rogue, and nod a greeting. Surprise flared inside her.

"Cobrastrike...?" Mintpool didn't trust her voice. "Do you two know each other?"

It was the black rogue who answered. Cobrastrike shuffled his paws uncomfortably. "Yes," the rogue meowed, her voice as smooth as honey. "It's hard to live around here without bumping into one another."

At this moment, Mintpool couldn't sort out how she was feeling. Fear struck every bone in her body. Bewilderment surged through her. This rogue, who'd attacked her camp, was friends with Cobrastrike?

"Uh... yeah..." Cobrastrike twitched his tail-tip. "I was invited to join the group of rogues."

"And you did?" Mintpool's mew was high. She didn't know what or how to feel right now.

Cobrastrike bowed his head. "Yes. Life would be better for me that way. I wouldn't have to worry about the rogues as a threat."

"And," the black she-cat added, purring and rising to her paws, "Cobrastrike is a wonderful addition to our group. He rose in our ranks quickly, gaining respect from every cat. He is a fabulous fighter and hunter, you know. It's a shame that FireClan exiled him."

Mintpool glanced at her friend. She'd been careful not to bring up the topic of exile around him. However, he seemed perfectly fine with it. If anything, instead of the despair she'd expected, she saw anger glittering in his eyes. Not towards the rogue, but towards his Clan. A revengeful anger.

"Anyway," the rogue meowed, "we're lucky that Cobrastrike joined

us. Of course, he did make the right decision. Now, Cobrastrike-" the black she-cat flicked his ear-tip "-aren't you going to introduce me to your friend?"

"Oh, of course." Cobrastrike cleared his throat, blinking at Mintpool as though begging her not to be mad at him. "Mintpool, meet Mamba."

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Word Count // 1211

Not Edited

Hi! Sorry for not posting in a couple days, but here's Chapter 30! Finally, you get to know who Mamba is! Did anyone already predict this? If so, let me know! And, please tell me how you think Mintpool's going to react. It's just another picture of Mamba at the top. By the way, it is summer break for me now, and I'm going on a vacation in a couple of days. I might not be very active then, so I wanted to get a chapter out before leaving. Okay, that's all. Bye!

Chapter 31

[image]

Mintpool felt as though the air had stilled. She was frozen in shock, her tail quivering. This rogue - one who'd attacked their camp - was Mamba?

Mamba flicked Cobrastrike's ear-tip. "Now, I don't suppose you'll mind introducing me to this... Clan friend of yours?"

Her tone made Mintpool's pelt bristle, completely forgetting about her shock and fear. Mamba spoke the word 'Clan' as though it was something weak and petty. *I don't know why I'm so surprised to find out she, of all cats, is Mamba,* the gray tabby thought wryly, her tail-tip twitching with anger. *In the visions, she certainly wasn't described as a good cat.*

"Right." Cobrastrike cleared his throat again. "Mamba, this is Mintpool."

"Oh!" Mamba's gaze sharpened, studying Mintpool more carefully. "Oh, that's right! I remember you. You were the cat who ran away from me." Her green eyes sparkled, as though laughing at the tabby. "Quite an entertainment. That's why we're here at the Clan territory. Clan cats are always so stupid and weak. It's funny to see them pretend to act strong."

The gray tabby leapt to her paws. "Clan cats aren't *weak*," she hissed.

"Oh, really?" Mamba blinked challengingly. "Fight me, then. As I recall, it was *your* Clan that needed help from another to fight us off."

Mintpool's pelt bristled. Even though she was a medicine cat, she left like leaping at the black she-cat and tearing her face off. However, Cobrastrike stepped between them quickly. "There's no need for that," he meowed, quickly.

The gray tabby glared at him. "Can I speak with you for a moment in private, please?"

As Cobrastrike nodded, Mamba answered.

"Of course." Mamba, looking both unfazed and amused, laughing at Mintpool meanly, rose to her paws. "I'll go wait over there. Call me if you need help, Cobrastrike, although I doubt you will, considering you're dealing with a Clan cat." She trotted out of the clearing, her black tail disappearing into the tall grass.

Cobrastrike shuffled his paws awkwardly. He didn't seem to have anything he needed to say, so Mintpool started. "Cobrastrike! How could you be hanging out with rogues?"

"I know, I know," Cobrastrike mewed, "but it's better this way. They're no threat to me if I join them."

"But they attacked the Clans!" Mintpool's green eyes widened, willing her friend to understand. Anger stirred in her belly. How could her friend join *rogues*? "They're sorry excuses for cats! They don't follow the Warrior Code! They attack whoever they want to and take whatever they want. There's no order!"

Cobrastrike blinked. "I'm not sure I agree with that," he replied slowly. "You haven't even met them yet."

Mintpool stared at him. She couldn't believe her ears. "I've met Mamba and I've seen the cats who attacked my camp." Her tail whisked with anger. "I don't need to meet any more."

"I mean you haven't seen how they live." Cobrastrike twitched his tail-tip. "I'm not saying I agree with what they've done, but this is the best option for me." He paused. "Actually, why *don't* I agree with them attacking our Clans? What has FireClan, or any Clan, ever done for me? All they got me was being looked at as a monster! My life would be better off if I was never in a Clan."

The gray tabby gaped at him. But she couldn't find a rebuttal to his words, couldn't find anything to defend the Clans against him. Because he was right. His life had been terrible inside FireClan, and

the other Clans didn't even seem to care when Viperfang died. *The Clans are too unforgiving,* Mintpool thought. *They wouldn't forgive even Fireclaw's descendants for something their ancestor had done thousands of moons ago, something they had no control over.*

She swallowed, nodding. "You're right," she mewed quietly. "But these rogues are still bad news." Worry for Cobrastrike still raged inside her. She knew he was a good fighter, but he couldn't take on so many rogues by himself, if they decided to turn on him.

Cobrastrike twitched his pelt. "You shouldn't judge them based on what you see on the outside," he meowed. "They're normal cats, just like you and me."

"Normal cats who attacked the Clans for no reason."

"There's not no reason." Cobrastrike leaned down. "Why do you think they've stayed here for so long?"

"To spite the Clans," Mintpool meowed swiftly. That was what she'd been told. The rogues were staying here simply to annoy and bring uneasiness to the Clans.

Her friend shook his head. "No. The Clans have all done something to them, like they've done to me."

"Really?" Mintpool felt shock flow through her. The Clans had really done something to all the rogues that were here? There was about as much as a Clan, from what she could tell from their attack. "How could the Clans have bothered so many?"

Cobrastrike shrugged. "Well, the Clans have a lot of cats, don't they? Little things can happen, like kicking rogues out of territories at first. Well, then many would run out of food. And you know how the Clans view cats that aren't inside their Clan. They think that if a cat doesn't follow the Warrior Code, they're wrong. In fact, they even view other Clan cats as worst than themselves!" He lowered his voice. "You know Mamba? She and her family were living on the edges of the Clans' territories. Then, one day, they accidently got too close to the borders, and her parents were attacked by FireClan cats."

Mintpool felt her eyes widen. "Really?" She hadn't ever viewed it from the rogues' point of view. Whenever something like that happened, she would agree with the Clans, thinking that they'd brought safety to the cats. She never thought of how the rogues would feel. "That's horrible."

Cobrastrike nodded. "Nothing as terrible happened to the other cats, but they all still hate the Clans. It was easy to gather them together. They all want revenge."

The gray tabby felt a shiver run down her spine. "Oh, wow." Everything seemed to have shifted now. She was viewing the Clans in a completely different light. However, as terrible thing as the Clans may have done, she was still on their side. After all, she was still a loyal AirClan cat. "That's horrible, Cobrastrike. But they still attacked and damaged so much of my camp and Clanmates!"

Cobrastrike blinked, before dipping his head. "I know you won't understand now," he meowed softly, "but perhaps one day you can realize how much of a menace the Clans are."

Mintpool stepped back, shocked by his words.

"Cobrastrike!" Mamba's voice travelled towards them as the black she-cat reappeared. "Are you done with your chat? It's time for hunting. You know, if you don't hunt-"

"You don't eat," Cobrastrike finished, getting to his paws. "Alright. I'm coming, Mamba." He turned around. "Bye, Mintpool. I know you don't like me joining the rogues, but I don't want that to come in between our friendship."

The gray tabby blinked at him, trying to process everything. He'd joined the rogues! The rogues had attacked and harmed her Clanmates! He didn't want that to come in between their friendship? It looked like a completely unreasonable thing to ask for! However, she understood Cobrastrike's reasoning. And, for some reason, she wasn't mad at him. Even as much as she told herself she wouldn't, she knew she'd come back and visit him again. "Okay. Bye."

Cobrastrike bowed his head, turning around and bounding after Mamba. It was only after that they disappeared that Mintpool acknowledged Mamba's words. *If you don't hunt, you don't eat? But what about the queens and elders?* She scoffed, getting to her paws, ready to retreat back to the Clans' territories. The rogue life seemed like a terrible one.

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Word Count // 1289

Not Edited

Hi! I'm back from the vacation. It was super fun; we met up with some family that we hadn't seen in a while. Anyway, new chapter! Sorry if the characters seem a little out of their normal personality - I'm kind of forgetting how to write them. I still hope it's okay! I'll probably go back and edit it later. Anyway, that's all for the Author's Note. Bye!

Chapter 32

[image]

The sky was a shade of orange as Mintpool made her way back into the camp. The sun was about set, just the edges of it peaking out over the trees. The gray tabby's paws ached as she trotted into the AirClan camp, her mind whirling with the events that had happened during her visit. Of all the things to happen, she certainly hadn't expected her friend to join a rogue group. Surprised was an understatement of how she was feeling.

As she entered, most cats paid her no attention except for a brief flick of their tail in greeting. They were all well-fed and now ready for the night. Some were sharing tongues drowsily, others were telling stories, and a few cats were trying to stuff down another piece of prey. Amusement sparkled through Mintpool as she caught sight of Adderclaw and Flowershine sharing tongues. *Those two are going to become mates soon.* No matter her relationship with them, she felt happy.

Mintpool blinked at the clearing once more. Every cat seemed so peaceful. She couldn't imagine them hurting rogues so terribly that they died. *Well, that's FireClan. Maybe AirClan hasn't done anything like that.* A shudder ran down her spine. *Rogues won't care, though. They'll just take revenge on any Clan, as long as it's a Clan.* A protective feeling for her Clanmates bloomed in her stomach as she weaved her way towards the medicine den.

Suddenly, a cat bumped into her. Mintpool stumbled slightly before regaining her footing. Her gaze moved towards Robinflight, who had recently received her warrior name. Her brown gaze was unapologetic as she blinked at the gray tabby.

Confusion flared inside Mintpool. "Um... do you need something?"

Robinflight huffed, twitching her tail-tip. "You returned to camp late."

"Yeah." Annoyance spiked at Mintpool's pelt. Is she seriously going to scold me because I arrived back at camp a little late?

"I hope you weren't visiting any other cats outside of our Clan," Robinflight meowed. "Like Leafwhisker. It's outside of the Warrior Code."

"What?" Mintpool's voice was edged with annoyance. "No it's not! You're allowed to have friends in different Clans. And even if warriors are more strict on that, I'm a medicine cat."

"You know what I mean." Robinflight leaned closer. "You and Leafwhisker are really close. I hope you aren't considering him as a mate. Medicine cats aren't allowed to have one."

Mintpool whisked her tail, half angry, half embarrassed. "I know that! It's ridiculous that you even think that I want a mate!"

"All I'm saying is that you and Leafwhisker are closer than friends should be." Robinflight's tone was accusing. "You need to watch your actions, Mintpool."

The gray tabby's pelt bushed with anger. Thankfully, their tones were low and their Clanmates didn't bother paying attention to them. "Don't tell me what to do! Me and Leafwhisker are *just friends*!"

Robinflight scoffed. "Sure. But if you break the code, don't say I didn't warn you." She turned around, trotting away, leaving Mintpool fuming in anger.

She spun around, her pelt bristled. *How dare she accuse me like that! Me and Leafwhisker are just friends, nothing more!* Mintpool ducked into the medicine den. Ever since she became a medicine cat, Echoleaf seemed to have become more and more distant towards her. Her former mentor seemed more skittish, as though awaiting some darkness.

Mintpool tilted her head. *Maybe it's the darkness from my dreams.* Since she hadn't been having them for quite a while, she'd just hoped that StarClan had been wrong. However, Echoleaf certainly

seemed to be waiting for something.

The gray she-cat, who'd been sorting herbs, practically leaped out of her pelt as she heard Mintpool's paw steps pad closer. "Oh, Mintpool," Echoleaf meowed as she got to her paws. "You're back. I hope there was no trouble, considering how late it is?"

"None at all," Mintpool replied. She knew she was lying, but she certainly wasn't going to tell Echoleaf about Cobrastrike! "I think I'll get to bed now."

Echoleaf blinked, as though considering something, before dipping her head. "Yes, of course. Before you do, however, there are some herbs that need to be brought to EarthClan tomorrow. Rainpool has asked for them, and I told her we'd bring it over instead of her coming to collect it. Do you want to bring it or shall I?"

The question seemed simple enough, however Echoleaf's gaze didn't seem that way. Her green eyes were sharp, as though testing Mintpool. The tabby twitched her tail-tip. *What test could this possibly be?* She was too weary and tired to think about it. All she knew was that she wanted to see her friends and they were in EarthClan. "I'll bring it."

There was no indication of whether or not she passed this "test". "Very well." Echoleaf turned, nodding at a bundle on the ground. "I've already packed it up for you."

The conversation was over. Echoleaf ducked out of the den, leaving Mintpool by herself. The tabby yawned, stretching, happy to be left alone for a while. She curled up inside her nest, wrapping her tail around her muzzle. Her muscles relaxed as she drifted off into sleep. Before she knew it, she was snoring softly.

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Dawn light beamed into the medicine den, shining directly on Mintpool's face, something that the gray tabby did not appreciate. She opened her eyes, squinting against the bright light. Echoleaf's breathing came from the back of the den, informing her that she was still asleep.

"Come on, Violetpaw!" Riverfrost's voice came from the outside of the medicine den. "It's time for dawn patrol!"

A happy squeal came from the newly apprenticed she-cat as she bounded towards her mentor. Her brown fur flashed in the entrance of the medicine den as she passed.

Mintpool purred. The Clan was doing well. New apprentices, and new kits would soon come. Echoleaf had woken her up last night, informing her that Snowfrost was expecting a second litter of kits. The gray tabby had been more than happy for her mother. Snowfrost had been devastated when Mintpool and Adderclaw's father passed briefly before their birth. She hoped that her mother would be happier with her new mate, Leafstorm.

The gray tabby briefly considered trying to get more sleep. However, it would be no use. It was practically time to wake up, anyway. Mintpool pushed herself to her paws, trotting swiftly across the den to the bundle that Echoleaf had indicated to the night before. Leaning down, she picked it up. *Might as well deliver this right now.*

As Mintpool trotted out of the medicine den, she caught sight of Snowfrost making her way towards her. Joy sparked in the gray tabby at the sight of her mother, and she laid down the bundle quickly to speak to her. "Hello!"

"Hi," Snowfrost purred, giving her ears an affectionate lick. "Where are you off to?"

"I'm just delivering some herbs to EarthClan," Mintpool explained. Unfortunately, Robinflight, who was close by, ready for the dawn patrol, heard it. The brown she-cat's head snapped towards her, giving her a warning look, which the tabby ignored with an eye-roll. She was frustrated at Robinflight's accusations. She and Leafwhisker were *just friends*.

"Well, have fun!" Snowfrost mewed cheerily. "I suppose Echoleaf told you about the new kits?"

Mintpool nodded eagerly. "Yup! I can't wait for them to arrive!

Leafstorm will be a wonderful father."

Snowfrost bowed her head. "Yes. If only Adderclaw thought that way, too."

"What do you mean?" Confusion flowed through Mintpool.

Her mother sighed. "I'm afraid Adderclaw... disapproves of Leafstorm. Do you think you could talk to your brother? Whether or not he likes their father, these kits will still be his kin. I don't want him to think badly about them."

Mintpool doubted there was anything she could do. She hadn't talked to Adderclaw in moons. Realization dawned on her. *I haven't spoken to my brother in* moons*!* Surely that wasn't a good sibling relationship. However, under Snowfrost's worried gaze, she whisked her tail. "Sure."

Relief flooded her mother's eyes as she gave Mintpool another warm lick. "Right. Well, have fun on the delivery! The forest is beautiful during leaf-fall."

The gray tabby nodded, dismissing herself from the conversation. She snatched up the bundle and bounded out of the camp. Bright colored leaves, splotched with red, orange, yellow, and brown, littered the grounds, announcing leaf-fall's arrival. Leaf-bare would be here soon.

Mintpool turned her focus on the path, not that she needed it. She knew the trail so well that she could do it with her eyes closed. She couldn't even count the amount of times that she'd met Leafwhisker at the borders.

Her paw steps thundered as she bounded through the forest, her tail streaming behind her. Her stomach felt a weighing feeling whenever she thought of having to speak to Adderclaw about Leafstorm. She had no idea what she was meant to say. However, she pushed the thought out of her mind, putting her sole attention on the beautiful forest.

Word Count // 1508

Not Edited

Hello! Here's another chapter. Most of it is a filler. Anyway, a SUPER important thing is happening in the next chapter! Any guesses of what it is? I'd love to hear your thoughts. Snowfrost is up above. Anyway, that's all. Goodbye!

Chapter 33

[image]

Mintpool slowed once she the entrance of EarthClan's camp came into sight, clutching the bundle in her jaws a little tighter. There was a small stream at the entrance, one that she had to leap across to get inside. Bunching her muscles, she sailed across, her paws landing firmly on the ground.

Amberheart, who had led her to the camp, followed her, waving her tail as she brought Mintpool inside. "Rainpool's not here right now, but Cloverleaf is. She's inside the medicine den."

"Okay!" Mintpool's voice was muffled. "Thank you."

Amberheart bowed her head. "I'll go inform Moonstar of your arrival." With that, she turned around, trotting into what Mintpool assumed was the leader's den.

As Mintpool turned, Leafwhisker's surprised yet delighted voice sounded behind her. "Mintpool? What are you doing here?"

The gray tabby turned around, her gaze lighting up at the sight of her friend. "Leafwhisker, hi!" She dropped the bundle as she gave him a quick, affectionate nudge. "I'm here to deliver some herbs."

"Oh, okay." Leafwhisker paused, looking as if he was about to say something else. Mintpool squinted her eyes at him. She knew him well enough to know that whenever he was nervous he did paused, as though hyping himself up before saying whatever he truly wanted to say. That's what had happened when he asked her to meet him at the borders. Now, it was happening again.

However, it seemed as though the hyping failed, because Leafwhisker just pointed his tail at a den. "There's the medicine den. Cloverleaf should be inside."

The gray tabby was puzzled by her friend's behavior, but she shook

it off. *If he wants to tell me what he's thinking he will.* "Okay, thanks." She leaned down, snatching up the bundle once more and bounding inside the medicine den.

Cloverleaf was more than happy to see her. "Mintpool!" The brown-and-white she-cat leapt forward, touching noses with her friend cheerfully. "How are you?"

"I'm fine!" Mintpool mewed back, just as cheery. "I brought you the herbs." She set down the bundle, gazing around the den. Everything was neatly stacked. Fresh moss nests were tucked away at the corners, and a clear pool was located towards the back.

"Oh, thank you! We were running low, and couldn't find anything in our territory. All the leaves were withered already!" Cloverleaf nosed open the bundle, her green gaze lighting up with delight. "This is great! It'll definitely last us through the leaf-bare."

Mintpool purred. "That's awesome." She hadn't spoken to Cloverleaf in a while, too. Not since they'd heard about Cobrastrike's exile. And she could tell that Cloverleaf was struggling to comprehend the information as well. Her friend seemed to be extra cheery, as though to cover that gaping sadness. Leafwhisker on the other paw... well, he seemed just fine, which was something else that made Mintpool confused. He seemed to change a lot recently.

"Well, I should go now. Echoleaf might need me." Just as Mintpool was about to turn around, she hesitated. *Should I tell Cloverleaf about Cobrastrike? No,* she decided. *Not now, at least. Maybe at a half-moon meeting.*

"Okay!" Cloverleaf waved her tail in farewell as she disappeared towards the back of the den, where the herbs were probably kept. "See you at the half-moon meeting!"

"Alright." Mintpool turned around, darting outside the den, bidding Moonstar a formal farewell. She couldn't find Leafwhisker to say goodbye, though. Slight disappointment weighed her but she shook it off, trotting outside of the camp.

"Mintpool, wait!" Leafwhisker's voice echoed behind her as he

bounded out of the camp after her.

"Leafwhisker!" Mintpool turned around, surprised. They were outside the camp; no other cats could hear them. "Do you need something?"

"Er... yeah..." Leafwhisker cleared his throat, shifting back and forth on each paw.

The gray tabby flicked her ears, puzzled at his confused behavior. *What's gotten into him these days?* "Oh, come on," she teased. "Spit it out."

Leafwhisker's pelt bristled nervously. Mintpool waited, leaning forward, her tail-tip twitching. *Is everything okay? Is he sick or something?*

"I like you," Leafwhisker blurted out.

The gray tabby stepped back, shock pulsing through her. "*What?* Did you just say...?" *Leafwhisker... likes me?* Her pelt bristled with absolute shock, her paws tingling. The EarthClan tom's gaze dropped to the ground, his tail-tip twitching as he searched for his next words. *This can't be real.*

Mintpool's mind whirled quickly. Thinking back on it, she did have feelings for Leafwhisker as well. He was funny, brave, and a good warrior. But this wasn't right! They couldn't - shouldn't - like each other. Panic seized hold of her. *Robinflight was right!*

"I-" Leafwhisker started.

"Sorry," Mintpool squeaked, quickly, panic taking over. "I don't feel the same way." Spinning around, she bounded away from the brown tom as fast as her paws would carry her.

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Mintpool didn't stop running until AirClan's camp was in sight. She stopped right outside, her chest heaving as she struggled to catch her breath. It was a late in the morning; most cats should be out on patrols. Thankfully, she should have most of the camp to herself.

The gray tabby felt as though she were shaking. She still couldn't get over the fact that Leafwhisker had feelings for her! *This isn't right! We're in separate Clans. And, more importantly, I'm a medicine cat and he's a warrior.* She collapsed to the ground, too shocked to hold herself up anymore. She had to rest and think.

Guilt seeped over her as she remembered what she'd said. She'd just... outright rejected him. He must've felt so scared and nervous to tell her. Then, she just ran away. Mintpool rested her head on her paws, her tail-tip twitching with guilt. *I'll see if I can make it up to him at the next Gathering.* She knew, until then, she was going to avoid EarthClan's border and try to avoid any contact with Leafwhisker. It was just too much of a shock.

Thinking back on it, she will shamefully admit to herself that she did have a crush on him as an apprentice, and early on when she received her full medicine cat name. She liked spending time with him. But now... she wasn't sure what to think. They'd been drifting apart, almost, with her spending more and more time with Cobrastrike. She felt as though she'd lost those feelings for her friend.

Another strike of guilt sent down her. She felt bad that he still liked her after she stopped spending as much time with him and lost her feelings.

"Mintpool?" A voice snapped her out of her thoughts. The gray tabby turned around, her eyes landing on Adderclaw. Behind him stood Mistyfur, Skystorm, and Talonfrost. A patrol has returned. "What are you doing on the ground?"

The gray tabby scrambled to her paws instantly, heat pulsing through her. "Sorry, I was just in thought."

Her brother's eyes narrowed. "On the *ground*?"

Mintpool fluffed her fur, answering his question with a quick and speeded nod. "Yup. Wow, I'm hungry. I'll see you later." Before he could question her any longer, she turned around and zipped into the camp, bounding past the fresh-kill pile and straight into the medicine den. Thankfully, Echoleaf was nowhere to be seen.

The tabby exhaled, plopping herself on the cool stone ground, as more guilt started crawling up her. *I promise you, Leafwhisker,* she thought, *that I will make this up to you.*

ϙ

Word Count // 1228

Not Edited

Hello! Here's a new chapter. So, any thoughts? Do you think Mintpool should feel guilty? Why or why not? I'd love to know! You don't need to agree with everything she says or does XD; I, personally, don't think she should feel guilty, but feel free to tell me your opinion! Okay, I don't know if it's just me, but it's *super* hot where I live right now. Make sure to drink lots of water! The cat at the top is Skystorm. I know she honestly had nothing to do with this chapter, but I like her name and I needed a chapter picture, so- Okay, that's all, bye!

Chapter 34

[image]

Mintpool's pelt was spiked with anxiety as she padded quietly through the darkened forest. The moon beamed brightly in the sky, a great contrast from how the tabby was feeling. It was a Gathering night. The patrol was chattering excitedly, but Mintpool had a lot of problems on her mind.

Firstly, of course, was the Leafwhisker thing. She wondered if he was going to be at the Gathering. Half of her hoped that he wouldn't, and she could just ask Cloverleaf to bring an apology to him. However, then, her friend would get curious and ask questions... she shook out her pelt. Perhaps it would be better to just speak to him.

Secondly, she was still worried about Cobrastrike. She hadn't visited him since the entire Leafwhisker thing. She was still shocked over the fact and was wondering what to do. She didn't want Leafwhisker to be upset, but they *couldn't* like each other. Not including the fact that she didn't really have feelings for him anymore. She wondered if her friend was still doing alright. He was living with rogues, after all. Her tail curled with anxiousness. She hoped the rogues hadn't hurt him.

Thirdly was the Adderclaw situation. Mintpool hadn't been able to complete Snowfrost's request yet. She just had too many things to worry over, she didn't have time to convince her brother not to dislike Leafstorm. In fact, the idea made her tail-tip twitch with frustration. *Why's he acting like a kit? Just accept that Snowfrost's having other things in her life and be happy!* However, deep down, she was feeling nervous over it, too. *What if she likes her new family better than us?* Mintpool shook her head, pushing the thought away. It was just another thing to worry over.

Finally, she was fretting over StarClan. Her warrior ancestors hadn't contacted her at all. Not even at the Moonpool. She'd try to get sucked into a dream, but it just wouldn't work. It was as though

StarClan had broken communication from her! She hadn't told Echoleaf about any of this. She was too worried over everything, and, with the way Echoleaf was acting around her these days, she was certain her mentor wouldn't handle it well.

The sudden heavy scent of Clan cats made Mintpool's pelt prick with surprise. She'd been so lost in her thoughts that she hadn't realized they'd reached the Gathering! Anxious murmurs filled the air, leaving a nervous strike to Mintpool's belly. Her hopes for the Gathering was that Leafwhisker would forgive her and the cheerful aura would ease her worry. However, it seemed that neither was going to happen tonight.

"Mintpool!" Cloverleaf's voice brought the gray tabby out of her thoughts. The brown-and-white she-cat trotted up to her, her green eyes unreadable. "What happened?"

"What do you mean?" Mintpool blinked at her, confused. "I think I'm meant to ask you that question. Why's everyone so upset?"

Cloverleaf shook her head. "You'll find out during the Gathering," she mewed quickly. "It should start soon. But I want to know what happened between you and Leafwhisker!"

Nervousness pummeled through Mintpool. *Does she know? How would she know? Did Leafwhisker tell her?* As much as she didn't like the thought of every other cat knowing something she didn't, she pushed that out of her mind, focusing on Cloverleaf's words. "What do you mean?"

Cloverleaf twitched her tail-tip. "I'm not a mouse-brain. I saw Leafwhisker follow you outside. Then I saw him come back into the camp, looking hurt. He's been down all moon. What happened out there?"

Guilt surged through Mintpool. "I can't tell you," she mewed at last.

Cloverleaf's eyes narrowed. "You know I'm your friend, right? You can tell me whatever."

"I know." Mintpool avoided the brown-and-white she-cat's gaze. "I

just- I can't tell you this. But I need to go apologize to Leafwhisker. Is he here?"

Cloverleaf eyed her cautiously. "Yes... he's right there." She nodded to a brown pelt within the crowd.

"Thanks. I'll be right back," Mintpool mewed quickly before darting towards the direction Cloverleaf had nodded at. Anxiety churned her belly as she padded forward, each step making her paws tingle with nerves.

Leafwhisker was staring at the tree where the leaders sat, not taking any acknowledgement of Mintpool's approach.

The gray tabby cleared her throat awkwardly. "Hi, Leafwhisker."

The brown tom grunted in response, not even bothering to look at her.

Mintpool got straight to the point. "Look, I'm sorry about what happened," she meowed quickly. "I wasn't thinking clearly! I worded things wrong. I'm really, really sorry if I hurt you. But we seriously can't-"

"It's okay, Mintpool." Leafwhisker's voice was cold as he cut her off. He turned to face her. His green eyes glittered with ice, no emotion showing. There was no laughter or joking in them anymore. "I understand. You just don't feel the same way about me." He pushed himself to his paws.

"No, wait!" Mintpool squeaked, hurrying up as well. Sure, he was correct, but... well, she wasn't sure *what* she was trying to do. "I wasn't trying to hurt you. I was just surprised."

"I know." Leafwhisker's voice was hard as he turned away to the crowd.

"Leafwhisker, wait!" The brown tom stopped in his tracks. "Look, I'm very, very sorry. But I promise, if I can do something to make it up to you, I will."

Leafwhisker turned around, cocking his head, still unreadable.

"Okay." was his only response before he turned around and disappeared in the crowd.

Despair wretched the gray tabby as she watched him pad away. She wasn't sure what she had expected, but she'd certainly hoped that he would forgive her. *It was just a wistful wish. There was no way he'd do that.* She plopped herself down, her tail curling around her paws miserably. She was certain that she'd just lost a friend. And there was no way to make that up.

"Let the Gathering begin!" Tigerstar's voice rang throughout the clearing. Mintpool just wanted to go back to camp. She didn't want to listen to the stupid reports. Nevertheless, she raised her head, watching the FireClan leader. As sad as she was, she was still going to show him some respect. It was just the right thing to do.

Much to her surprise, Tigerstar skipped the entire report part. "The rogues are getting more and more dangerous." His voice rang out through the clearing. "Now, they're beginning to adopt more cats: cats that could know our weaknesses." His amber gaze swept the cats below him. "FireClan was just attacked by the rogues. They managed to get inside our camp." His claws dug into the branch below him, his voice hard. "And they were led by no other than Cobrastrike."

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Word Count // 1105

Not Edited

Hi! Here's another chapter. Sorry for not posting in a couple days. So, what do you think of this one? Whose side are you on, Leafwhisker's or Mintpool's? I see logic for both sides, but I feel like Mintpool shouldn't feel guilty. I'd love to hear what you think! And, how do you think Mintpool's going to react hearing Cobrastrike led the rogues to attack FireClan? Please tell me! The picture above is just another one of Mintpool! Okay, that's all. Bye!

Chapter 35

[image]

Mintpool's pelt fluffed up with surprise, shock and anger flowing through her. *Cobrastrike... attacked FireClan?* She blinked, trying to wrap her mind around that. He was such a kind and gentle cat! To attack a Clan... well, she couldn't even begin to imagine him doing that. As for the anger, she understood that he was mad at FireClan, but it was an automatic reaction - anything that went against the Clans brought a prick of anger to her pelt. However, she tried calming herself down, thinking about it from Cobrastrike's point of view. She wasn't definitely happy that her friend had done such a thing, but she could understand why.

Tigerstar growled from the branch, lashing his tail. "He must be stopped!" the dark tom yowled. "Him and the rogues! This is getting ridiculous! They've already attacked us all! Are we really going to just sit here, waiting for their next attack?"

Murmurs of agreement filled the air.

"We need a plan," Tigerstar continued, pacing back and forth on the branch, "to end them, once and for all!" He gazed around at the cats below him. "But you've seen what they can do. One Clan can't take them on alone! We need help. That's why all the Clans need to get together and-"

"Tigerstar, wait." The dark tom's speech was cut off by Sunstar. The orange tom blinked at the FireClan leader. "You want us all to team up to attack the rogues?"

"Yes." Tigerstar stared back at him. "It needs to be done. These rogues must be defeated."

Spottedstar twitched her pelt, blinking at the FireClan leader uncertainly. Although Mintpool was sure that she, too, wanted to get rid of the rogues, she just didn't trust Tigerstar completely. The FireClan leader sure didn't give off a easy-to-work-with aura.

"I don't know..." Moonstar looked conflicted. "Does the Warrior Code allow this?"

Tigerstar twitched his tail-tip with frustration. "Why wouldn't it?"

"Well..." The EarthClan leader shot a quick glance up at the sky. "We should check if StarClan approves first, before we take any action."

"Quit this mouse-brained thinking!" Tigerstar snarled. "This needs to be done, and quickly!"

Mintpool blinked at him, completely in shock. *So this is what the elders mean by FireClan being... spirited. He just called another leader mouse-brained.*

It was clear that Moonstar didn't miss that. Fury glittered in her blue gaze as Spottedstar and Sunstar just sat, silent. "What did you just say?"

Tigerstar didn't hesitate to repeat himself. "Your thinking is mouse-brained! We need to stop the rogues! Stop taking so many precautions."

Soft growls of anger came from the EarthClan cats as they glared up at the FireClan leader. Before long, their furious yowls filled the air.

"What did you just call our leader?"

"You think you have the right to tell us what to do?"

"What do you mean by "precautions"? We're just making sure StarClan approves!"

"Or do you not care about our warrior ancestors at all?"

Moonstar whisked her tail angrily. "We're not going to join your little attack," she declared.

"*What*?" Tigerstar glowered at her. "Are you mouse-brained? This is what we need to do to stop the rogues!"

Snarls of anger rose from the EarthClan cats again, this time

countered by FireClan warriors. The two Clans seemed on edges, pelts bristled, lips pulled back into a snarl, glaring at each other. Mintpool caught sight of Leafwhisker crouched down in front of a FireClan cat, snarling, looking ready to attack. Even Cloverleaf scooched away from Nightstrike, the FireClan medicine cat doing the same.

"Do not tell us what to do!" Moonstar yowled. "When we team up, it won't really be a team! It'll just be you bossing us all around!" Her white pelt was bristled until she was twice her size, her blue eyes flaming blue fire. "How dare you even try to tell EarthClan what's right and what's wrong! We'll decide that for ourselves!"

Tigerstar lashed his tail. "Isn't it obvious what to do? Or are you so mouse-brained that you can't even see the clear correct steps in front of you."

"How dare you!"

Dark clouds drifted over the moon, the silver light instantly gone. Shock struck Mintpool as she held still. It seemed as though the cats around her did as well.

Moonstar's pelt instantly flattened, looking apologetic as she blinked up at the sky. "Come along, EarthClan. We're leaving." With a sharp flick of her tail, she led the patrol out of the clearing.

Mintpool felt Leafwhisker brush past her coldly. She blinked after him, half in shock from what happened and half hurt by his actions. EarthClan filed out of the clearing quietly after Moonstar, although their pelts were still bristled with anger.

As soon as Moonstar was gone, Tigerstar yowled after her. "Fine! Leave! Let's see how brave you act when the rogues attack you!"

"Stop this," Spottedstar chided. "The Gathering is at a end - StarClan has declared that."

"What?" Tigerstar protested, his mew heavy with anger. "We still need to plan!"

"Not tonight," Sunstar meowed firmly. "StarClan wants this

Gathering to come to an end, and we are to respect their wishes. Perhaps we could've had more time." At those words, he sent a hard look towards the FireClan leader.

Should another cat do that, they would've gotten their face clawed out, but Tigerstar's pelt just fluffed angrily. "How is it my fault?"

Spottedstar gave him a *seriously* look as she leaped off of the tree. Sunstar followed her, his pelt twitching as he blinked up at Tigerstar.

"It's not my fault!" Tigerstar insisted, leaping after them. "How is it my fault if Moonstar and EarthClan is sensitive and mouse-brained? They can't even see the correct path in front of them and gets mad when I try to help!"

"Enough," Spottedstar growled. "You showed them absolutely no respect."

"Don't tell me what to do," Tigerstar snarled back.

Sunstar stepped between the two bristling leaders. "No more of this," he meowed. "The Gathering is at an end. I suggest we all go back to camp."

Spottedstar bowed her head, flicking her tail towards the AirClan patrol. Mintpool hurried towards her, a cold feeling seeping through her. FireClan was really easy to argue with. They were arrogant, rude, and never took responsibility for their actions! Just look at Tigerstar for example.

She shivered as they entered the forest, feeling shadows dance around them, not a single speck of silver light visible. Her pelt twitched, hearing the sound of her Clanmates' paws crunching the leaves on the ground and feeling the anger and surprise that were fuming from their pelts.

The Gathering had been completely crazy and insane. FireClan and EarthClan hated each other! *How are we ever supposed to work together to get rid of the rogues now?*

Mintpool blinked up at the starless sky, her pelt twitching. Too

much had happened at the Gathering. She couldn't even begin to worry about healing her and Leafwhisker's friendship. All she could think about was how guilty she felt. At what? Well, even though she knew it was wrong, a little bit of her wished that the Clans wouldn't attack the rogues.

It's because you want a peaceful way out, she tried convincing herself, but she knew that wasn't the reason. Not the entire reason, anyway. It's because she didn't want Cobrastrike to get hurt.

A sigh escaped her as she trotted after her Clanmates. Cobrastrike was exactly the opposite of how Tigerstar acted. Although she felt terrible for the way his Clanmates treated him, a small part of her felt glad for how he'd been raised. *Since he's never exactly been accepted, he doesn't act like them. He didn't pick up their bad habits.*

Mintpool took another glance at the sky. Everything was dark, bringing a heavy feeling towards her. It felt as though a terrible future was looming over her.

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Word Count // 1297

Hi! What did you think of Chapter 35? Are you on Tigerstar or Moonstar's side? Do you think that the Clans will attack the rogues? If so, how will it play out? How do you think Mintpool's going to participate? I'd love to know! Okay, Moonstar's at the top! That's all, bye!

Chapter 36

[image]

The morning sun peeked over the trees as Mintpool trotted along with the patrol, yawning. Her tabby pelt was ruffled with sleep as she followed Adderclaw, Brightstorm, Whitewhisker, and Eagleflight, Echoleaf at her tail. Ever since the Gathering, Tigerstar had sent a patrol over to AirClan's territory, asking if they were willing to join him in ridding the rogues. Spottedstar had accepted, giving out orders to her Clan, making sure that they were training hard. She'd even put medicine cats to training!

Now, as Mintpool padded through the forest, following her Clanmates for a training session, led by Adderclaw, another yawn exited her. It was before dawn!

"Why is the training session so early?" Mintpool muttered as she padded along, acting like a grouchy apprentice.

She'd meant for her words to go unheard by her Clanmates, but Whitewhisker angled his ears, catching them. "Spottedstar wants us to use every second of the day, I suppose." He ruffled his pelt. "Even the time before the sun rises."

Mintpool's pelt burned, for she hadn't meant for anyone to hear her. Echoleaf shot her an amused glance as the gray tabby nodded quickly.

"Besides," Brightstorm mewed, tagging on, "this might be good! The rogues won't be up by now. If any of them are watching our territory, they won't be watching this, and won't know what we are planning!"

"Brightstorm, you mouse-brain," Eagleflight teased affectionately. "If the rogues were spying on us, why would they let any second go by? There would always be a cat watching our territory! And, besides, the Training Hollow is at the center. All they would be able to see is towards the top edges."

Brightstorm ducked her head. "It was just a guess!"

Mintpool watched the two she-cats interact, missing her friendship with Leafwhisker even more.

Adderclaw glanced back at the talking cats, his normally alert gaze sleepy. "Come on. Let's hurry."

The patrol's paw steps quickened, showing their agreement, as they trotted through the forest. Mintpool felt as though her pelt was spiked with unease as she looked at Adderclaw. The two cats hadn't talked in ages. They've definitely lost their littermate bond. As badly as the gray tabby wanted to recreate it, she wouldn't even know what to say! And, with Snowfrost's request on top of that...

She shivered. She still hadn't gotten to what her mother had asked her to do. *But I don't even know what to say, or what to begin with! Do I just go up to him and say, 'Hi, Adderclaw, you'd better like Leafstorm because whether or not you do Snowfrost does and she's moving on, get used to it.'?*

Before long, the Training Hollow was in sight. Mintpool felt her pelt twitch as she padded onto the sandy grounds. She felt out of place here, a place where warriors train.

Adderclaw twitched his tail-tip, catching the patrol's attention. "We're going to do some training exercises," he meowed. "Brightstorm, Whitewhisker, you'll work together. Echoleaf and Eagleflight will be the other pair. Have one partner attack as the other dodges. I'll work with Mintpool."

Soft murmurs spread throughout the patrol as the cats moved to their partners. As her brother trotted towards her, despite her sleepiness, Mintpool felt a burst of excitement. She loved learning new things, and, although she wasn't the fondest of fighting, it was certainly something new to learn! Besides, she'd mastered the rear move, hadn't she? How hard could this be?

"Hi!" Adderclaw chirped as he approached. Thankfully, he didn't seem to have the same mindset as Mintpool, because his actions were at ease and cheerful, no awkwardness in them at all. It put the

gray tabby right to ease. "We'll start with something simple. The duck and roll, okay?"

"Alright!" Mintpool twitched her tail-tip as Adderclaw demonstrated the move. Her green gaze rested on him, unmoving, trying to take in every bit of his actions. Determination surged through her, erasing all her sleepiness as she prepared for a morning of training.

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It was sun-high before Adderclaw finally decided that the training session was over. "Okay, you all can leave now!" the black-and-white tom announced. "I'll catch up later."

The exhausted cats didn't bother asking what he was doing, happily heading back to the camp instantly. Mintpool hesitated, staying behind as she watched Eagleflight's tail whisk into the forest. "What're you doing?"

Adderclaw glanced at her. "Oh, I was just going to catch something before I head back," he explained. There seemed to be something he wasn't telling her, an excited glimmer in his blue eyes that made Mintpool sure it was a good secret, at the very least. "It's leaf-fall, almost leaf-bare, now. Prey is going to run short soon." Now, his tone changed into a worried one.

Mintpool's pelt pricked with confusion. She trotted up to him, giving his ears a playful flick. "Come on, what secret are you hiding?"

"What?" Adderclaw, by the way, was probably one of the worst cats at hiding anything. Even if Mintpool wasn't his sister, she'd be able to see through his act right away. "I'm not hiding anything!" The gray tabby gave him a teasing look, refusing to back down. "Fine." Adderclaw huffed, although he seemed to be excited to tell the news, anyway. "Flowershine's expecting kits!"

A happy shock pulsed through Mintpool. "What? That's amazing! Congratulations!"

Adderclaw nodded cheerfully. "I just hope she has enough food

through leaf-bare..."

"I'm sure she will. Our Clanmates will make sure of it," Mintpool chirped, excited. "When did you find out?"

"Just this morning." Adderclaw ducked his head. "Echoleaf told her last night."

"I can't believe Echoleaf didn't tell me!" Mintpool mewed, feeling slightly betrayed, but still bubbling with excitement. "Still, that's awesome! Does she have to stay in the nursery yet?"

Adderclaw purred. "Probably not yet. Echoleaf says she can still patrol, hunt, and fight."

Mintpool still felt excited, like a kit exploring the camp for the first time. *Calm down, you're a medicine cat, you should know this stuff.* She was happy that it seemed some of their littermate connection was restored. *Maybe you should ask him about Leafstorm now...?*

The gray tabby took a deep breath. "So... speaking of kits... have you seen how Snowfrost's doing?"

Instantly, Adderclaw's mood changed. "Yeah. She seems like she's doing great with her new family."

Guilt pressed into Mintpool. She hadn't meant to ruin her brother's good mood. However, she'd put this conversation off for about a moon now. She'd promised Snowfrost. "Yeah. Leafstorm visits her every day. I'm sure he'll be a great father."

Adderclaw huffed. "I doubt it," he muttered. "But I'm sure Snowfrost will be too blinded by her "love" to notice. How could she pick suck a tom in the first place, I'll never understand."

Mintpool blinked. *This is going to be a lot harder than expected.* "Look, Adderclaw, I'm sure Snowfrost will still love us. This is a *good* thing! New kits means new life for the Clan! And Leafstorm's going to be a wonderful father and mate. Snowfrost's happy!"

"Happier than with us?" Adderclaw twitched his tail-tip irritably. "Yeah, I bet. Stupid Leafstorm."

"Adderclaw-"

"Don't you see, Mintpool?" Adderclaw cut her off, his pelt bristled. "Snowfrost doesn't love us anymore! She's replaced us! She's replaced us with Leafstorm and her new kits! She doesn't need us anymore, and now she's just throwing us out!"

"I'm sure that's not-"

"I've got to go," Adderclaw interrupted. "The prey will be getting away." Turning around, he stalked coldly away.

Mintpool stared after him, frustrated. *You mouse-brain! she scolded herself. You ruined the good mood and now Adderclaw's angry at you.* Her tail lashed. *First Leafwhisker now your brother! You sure have a good way with words, Mintpool.* The last bit was sarcastic as she spun around, huffing as she padded back to camp. Hopefully though, unlike Leafwhisker, Adderclaw will forgive her.

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Word Count // 1285

Not Edited

Hello! The top bit is really just a filler, but the second half... well, Flowershine and Adderclaw's having kits! Pretty nice! Did anyone ship them? I know some people knew they liked each other, but I don't know if there were any ships. And- well, what do you think of Adderclaw and Mintpool's conversation? Should Mintpool have brought it up at that time? Do you think Adderclaw reacted immaturely? Do you think that Mintpool should have executed the conversation better? Let me know!

The cat at the top is Leafstorm. Okay, that's all. Bye!

Chapter 37

[image]

The golden sun fell over the clearing, settling into darkness, casting shadows into AirClan's camp. A happy chatter bounced off the walls as the cats of AirClan settled in for the night. Most were sprawled out in the clearing, sharing tongues, telling stories, or gulping down prey. Some were already asleep. Snowfrost padded out from the nursery, her flanks beginning to swell from the kits, joining Leafstorm at a corner as the two began to share tongues drowsily.

Mintpool crouched at the mouth of the medicine den, finishing her last bites of a mouse that lay at her paws. As she gazed around the camp, a feeling of pride filled her. *AirClan's strong. There's nothing we won't be able to defeat.* However, as her gaze wandered towards Adderclaw, she felt the pride melt away into worry. *Hopefully he won't stay mad at me for long.*

She laid her head onto her paws in a sigh. Guilt wormed her belly. After her and Adderclaw's conversation, she'd only made his thoughts of Leafstorm and Snowfrost worse, if anything.

She pawed gloomily at a red leaf, crunching it under her paws, her thoughts wandering off yet again. *Leaf-bare is normally when times are tough. Hopefully AirClan will be okay through the season.*

Suddenly, she heard paw steps crunch the fallen leaves. Her ears straightened into a perk, angling them, trying to find out more. The paw steps seemed to come from... outside the camp. Her pelt pricked. *There's no more patrols out. What could it be?*

One by one, her Clanmates seemed to notice it, too. Their happy chatter stopped just as four cats burst into the clearing.

Mintpool sprang to her paws, alarmed, as did the rest of her Clanmates. Spottedstar had leaped from the Clanledge instantly, her golden fur bristled. However, it smoothened as she recognized who it was, as did the rest of the AirClan cats. It was just a FireClan

patrol!

A white tom stood in the lead. "Greetings," he meowed.

"Froststrike." Spottedstar's voice was cautious as Thistlefur padded up next to her. "What can we do for you?"

"Tigerstar wants to call an emergency Gathering tomorrow," Froststrike replied. "He has asked for all the Clan leaders to come."

Spottedstar and Thistlefur exchanged a glance. "This is about the rogues?"

"Yes."

"We'll come," the AirClan leader meowed slowly, "if Moonstar agrees. We won't be attending if EarthClan isn't."

This sent a ripple of anger through the FireClan patrol. Mintpool twitched her tail-tip. She could see Spottedstar's reasoning. The rogues were obviously something that the Clans had to deal with together. There was no point without EarthClan.

Another thought formed in the gray tabby's mind. *I wonder if it's the rogues who caused all those deaths in my dream...* She shuddered, remembering the one of Cobrastrike killing Leafwhisker. *Cobrastrike is part of the rogues now.* She hated that thought, but it was the truth. It seemed as though her friend was gone.

The Cobrastrike situation was complicated for Mintpool. She missed her friend terribly, but she didn't think it was a good idea to visit him... not with the rogues attacking the Clans. She didn't think he himself would ever hurt her, but she certainly couldn't say the same thing about the rogues.

"Moonstar's agreed to attend," Froststrike mewed. "We visited EarthClan before coming here. I suppose we'll see you tomorrow with your deputy and medicine cats."

Mintpool's pelt bristled as she watched the FireClan patrol retreat. *FireClan's so bossy!* From one glance at her Clanmates, she could tell they all felt the same. However, now was not a time to pick at

issues. They had to face the rogues as a strong front.

The gray tabby climbed to her paws, padding into the medicine den. Tomorrow would be a long day.

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Weak moonlight lit the way for Mintpool, Echoleaf, Spottedstar, and Thistlefur as they made their way to the Gathering clearing. The other leaders, deputies, and medicine cats were already there, waiting for them. Moonstar and her deputy, Seedwhisker, stood far from Tigerstar and his deputy, Flarecloud.

Mintpool shot Cloverleaf a quick glance of greeting before shuffling over by her friend, Echoleaf on her tail to sit by Rainpool.

"Greetings," Tigerstar meowed, dipping his head as the AirClan patrol arrived.

Spottedstar nodded back in response.

"So," Tigerstar meowed, scanning the leaders, "we need to discuss the plan for the rou-"

"Wait a minute," Moonstar interrupted. "EarthClan hasn't agreed to join yet."

Tigerstar blinked at her. "You're in this meeting."

"We agreed to come to the meeting," Moonstar meowed, "but not to join."

Mintpool and Echoleaf exchanged a glance. Moonstar was hinting that they saw sense in Tigerstar's plan, and was saying that they now had an open mind and might join. Tigerstar, however, completely missed that.

His dark fur began to rise. "Then why are you even here?"

Moonstar glared at him. "As I recall, it was your patrol who said that you wanted to talk this out calmly! That's why I came, to see if we could fix what happened at the Gathering! Well, it doesn't seem

very calm, does it?"

Tigerstar bared his teeth at her as Spottedstar hurried to shove herself in between them. "Let's all stay calm," the golden she-cat meowed.

"Tell that to him!" Moonstar hissed. "He's the one who's getting all upset!"

"Me?" Tigerstar glared at her. "Well, look who's the one hissing! I don't think it's me, now, is it?"

Moonstar's white pelt bristled. "Quit thinking that everyone agrees with you!" she growled, her claws digging into the ground. "You're not the leader of all the Clans!"

"I don't think that I'm the ruler," Tigerstar snarled. "If I were, you'd be banished! You can't even see the right steps ahead of you, you fool-"

"Enough!" Sunstar yowled, his tone angry. "This may not be a normal Gathering, but it still is one!"

Tension rose heavily from the leaders. Mintpool felt Cloverleaf's fur bristle from besides her. Her friend's eyes were blazing green fire as she glared at Tigerstar. The gray tabby had never seen her friend like that before.

Sunstar turned towards the EarthClan leader once more. "Moonstar," he meowed slowly, "I understand that you don't want to do anything that StarClan disapproves of. None of us would. However, I don't believe that StarClan would disapprove of this."

Moonstar twitched her tail-tip. "Well, they might. Knowing *him*-" She shot a nasty look at Tigerstar "-the plan most likely involves killing." A low growl came from Tigerstar.

Sunstar shuffled his paws uneasily. "Yes, but the Warrior Code doesn't say to never kill. It says only when necessary, and, with the rogues... it may be necessary." He took a deep breath. "I don't think we're doing anything wrong. We're only defending our territory. Why would StarClan disapprove?"

Moonstar blinked, as though thinking, before finally nodding. "Very well. EarthClan will join."

Tigerstar's eyes lit up as he instantly jumped forward, explaining the plan.

Mintpool toned out his voice as she stared at her paws, her pelt prickling uneasily. Guilt surged through her as she realized that a small part of her still had hoped that EarthClan wouldn't join... that the Clans wouldn't attack the rogues. Simply because Cobrastrike is there. Her tail-tip twitched. The battle against the rogues seemed to be set. Even without visions, she could tell that the future was going to be bloody. It was not going to be an easy battle.

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Word Count // 1214

Not Edited

Yay, Chapter 37 is finished! By the way, sorry if this book is getting kind of long- it's basically going to keep going until Mintpool's death. Anyway, this is a bit of a filler... still, any thoughts? Any predictions of the future? It seems that Mintpool's having a little trouble with her loyalty, with not wanting to fight because of Cobrastrike... any ideas of what she's going to think or do during the battle? Let me know! The cat at the top is Froststrike. Okay, that's all, bye!

Chapter 38

[image]

A moon whirled by, quick as a flash. Mintpool had no idea how time had passed so quickly - she hated the idea of a battle looming upon them, wishing to hold off the fighting as long as possible. Each day, tensions for the battle was thick in the air. Cats trained hard. Mintpool had learned several moves to defend herself - enough that she was confident she could keep up a fight with a rogue until a warrior came to help.

It seemed the rogues were restless as well. A couple days ago, a patrol had returned, reporting that the rogue scent seemed thicker and thicker, with more rogues as well. This sent a shudder down Mintpool's spine. The warriors were very well trained, but the advantages the rogues had were... well, they outnumbered the Clans. She hadn't realized the Clans had made so many enemies. That's why the four Clans needed to gather together. Hopefully, with all the cats, the fight will be somewhat evened out.

Mintpool sighed, pulling herself out of her thoughts, turning her brain back to present day. *What was I doing again?* She glanced down, where a couple sprigs of chervil was in her jaws. *Oh, right.* They were low, and leaf-bare was approaching quicker than any cat wanted. The trees were bare of leaves and a chilly frost was in the air.

The gray tabby sighed, letting herself wander in more search of the herb. *There's more at the border of EarthClan...* She hesitated, before making her decision. *You mouse-brain! You're still a medicine cat! Just because you and Leafwhisker aren't friends anymore doesn't mean you shouldn't go get herbs to help your Clan.* She shook her head, bounding towards the EarthClan border.

Just as she'd thought, she found a nice patch of the herb. As she leaned down, a familiar scent caught her nose. Leafwhisker's scent. Mintpool straightened instantly, her green gaze scanning EarthClan's forest for a rustle of bushes or crunch of leaves, hinting

that the brown tom would be here. Nothing.

She sniffed at the patch again. His scent was somewhat fresh... fresher than all the other scents, which ruled out the idea what he'd came during a border patrol. And, his scent was leading up the hill, where she and him used to explore as apprentices.

A lingering sadness tingled in her pelt as her mind flashed with the memories of chasing each other up the hill. *Well, that's all over now.* Still, she felt puzzled, refusing to let the situation go. *Why's he going back up there, then? Doesn't he remember the unfamiliar forest, with Luna in it? There's no Clans there.* She twitched her tail-tip, confused, before shaking her head as though ridding the thought. *Forget this, Mintpool. Focus on what you're doing now.*

The gray tabby leaned down, grabbing as much chervil as she could carry, and turned around, bounding towards AirClan's camp.

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A happy sigh excited the gray tabby as she trotted into the camp, not surprised to find it empty. It was past sunset, and the orange sky was fading away for the night. Normally, now would be when her Clanmates shared tongues. However, even though it wasn't leaf-bare yet, it certainly was chilly enough to make a cat cold - especially without the daylight. Her Clanmates were probably inside her dens, cold and tired from a day of training.

Mintpool began trotting towards the medicine den, her paws aching. *I can't wait to gulp down a warm mouse then go to sleep.* As she poked her head into the den, however, about to greet Echoleaf, she was surprised to find it empty. A wave of confusion surged through her as she padded into the herb storage. *Maybe she's in here?* It was empty.

The gray tabby twitched her tail-tip as she put away the chervil.

Where did Echoleaf go? Mintpool tilted her head, puzzled. *I arrived back later than normal - she can't possibly be out for herbs. It's much to late for that.* She swept her tail. *She isn't in the clearing, either... Had the rogues gotten to her?* These days, her thoughts always seemed to

tilt towards the worst.

Just as the gray tabby was about to duck out into the clearing once more, Echoleaf's head poked into the medicine den.

Relief filled Mintpool. "Echoleaf!" However, from just one look at the gray she-cat's eyes, the relief disappeared.

Echoleaf's green eyes were full of worry as she hurried into the den. "Hi, Mintpool," she meowed quickly. "Grab some tansy."

The gray tabby's pelt spiked with confusion, but she hurried to follow the instructions. Soon, she and Echoleaf both ducked out of the medicine den, her jaws full of tansy and her former mentor's feverfew.

"What do we need these for?" Mintpool asked, her voice coming out muffled.

Echoleaf's pelt rippled. "Hopefully it'll be nothing to worry about soon." was her only answer.

The gray tabby felt her fur rise. "Echoleaf! I'm not an apprentice anymore! You can tell me things."

She didn't miss the gray she-cat's brief hesitation before she nodded. "Right... well, Spottedstar has a case of whitecough."

"Whitecough?" Mintpool's pelt fluffed with alarm. "Oh, no!"

Echoleaf ducked her head in agreement. "And leaf-bare has come too early this season," she mewed, her voice soft. "All the catmint is ruined already."

Mintpool twitched her pelt. "What about asking for another Clan for some catmint?"

Echoleaf blinked. "Not yet," she meowed. "Then the other Clans will know our leader's sick. It's just whitecough. Maybe it would develop into anything more serious."

The gray tabby nodded. However, she noticed Echoleaf's voice was

shaky, as much as she was trying to sound confident. And, she sounded like she was trying to convince herself more than Mintpool.

"Echoleaf?" Mintpool tilted her head. "What else are you not telling me."

Echoleaf sighed. "Well... Spottedstar's on her last life."

Horror and alarm struck the gray tabby once more. "Her last life?" Mintpool felt her tail lash, not out of anger, but shock. "How can that be?"

Echoleaf shot a wry look towards her, although deep worry was hidden behind it. "She's old, Mintpool. She was leader when I was born."

The gray tabby nodded nervously as they crossed the camp towards the leader's den. A cold breeze blew through her pelt, chilling her to the bone. *Spottedstar has to be okay!* However, she couldn't even convince herself.

Because of the quick leaf-bare, the medicine cats had been completely thrown off their paws. They'd thought they had more time to gather herbs, but the cold weather had come too soon. Their storages were low, and most of the herbs inside the forest were practically ruined. If not, it was certainly unusable. The other medicine cats seemed to be having the same issues. Mintpool didn't even know if they had any catmint storages, either!

And, other than that, Snowfrost's kits were going to be arriving soon. Worry pressed the gray tabby. Would her mother be okay? Would she have enough herbs to help her? What if something went wrong?

Mintpool took a deep breath, calming herself. *Everything will be okay. Echoleaf's a very experienced medicine cat who's delivered countless litters. And Snowfrost's already had a litter once - she'll be fine.* However, that didn't stop another nervous tail-tip twitch from the gray tabby as her mind drifted towards the other queen: Flowershine. *Hopefully her kits can wait until newleaf, when we have*

more herbs to help.

The sound of vines rustling startled Mintpool out of her thoughts. Echoleaf had ducked into the leader's den, a terrible hacking cough sounding from it. Taking another deep breath, the gray tabby followed her, the scent of sickness and blood bathing her tongue.

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Word Count // 1292

Not Edited

Hi! Sorry for not posting for a couple of days. But, here's Chapter 38! A bit of a filler, but there's quite a bit of foreshadowing or clues about the future... any predictions? I'd love to know! By the way, thank you all so, so much for 1.4k views and over 200 votes! That's absolutely crazy! I really appreciate it! The picture at the top is catmint. Okay, that's all, bye!

Chapter 39

[image]

The full moon was shining brightly against the dark sky as the AirClan patrol made their way silently through the forest. Mintpool's stomach took a twist as she glanced up at the moon. She couldn't help but feel it was way too bright and cheerful for how things were going. The rest of her Clanmates seemed to feel the same way as well. Normally, bright and excited chatters would fill the air. Now, the air was thick with tension and worry.

A cold gust of wind blew towards the cats, chilling them to their bone. Mintpool shivered as she trotted on. Leaf-bare was truly here.

The gray tabby shook out her pelt as she glanced at the front of the patrol. Thistlefur stood there, his dark pelt fluffed out against the cold, flicking his tail to lead the patrol. Spottedstar was absent.

The gray tabby ducked her head. The golden she-cat's condition had only gotten worse. She and Echoleaf had moved her to the medicine den, so they could keep an eye on her. However, there wasn't much they could do without catmint. Mintpool had tried to reach to StarClan for advice during the half-moon meetings, but it was no use; StarClan had no guidance to offer.

Soon, the Gathering clearing was in sight. With another flick of his tail, Thistlefur led the AirClan cats into the clearing. Mintpool bounded inside, her paws tired. Normally, she'd be as excited as can be for a Gathering, but now, a Gathering only reminded her of the bad stuff that happened. Leafwhisker wouldn't talk to her anymore, and she had no idea how Cobrastrike was doing! She just wished she could speak to either of the cats.

The gray tabby caught sight of Leafwhisker, but she skirted past him, deciding that that was best, joining the medicine cats at the back of the clearing.

Rainpool's eyes lit up as she spotted Mintpool. "Greetings," she

meowed. "Where's Echoleaf?"

The gray tabby dipped her head respectfully in reply. The gray she-cat had decided to stay at the camp to watch over Spottedstar. "She's in the camp with Spottedstar."

Sympathy flooded Rainpool's gaze. "Is she doing any better?"

Mintpool sighed. "I'm afraid not."

"I just wish we had some catmint to spear," Cloverleaf meowed sadly, jumping into the conversation. Her voice caught the attention of Nightstrike and Ravenleaf, who both nodded. Normally, they wouldn't go asking for another Clan's herbs so quickly, but Spottedstar needed it urgently. Unfortunately, the other Clans were just as low as they were.

"Thank you," Mintpool meowed, "but I'm sure we'll figure something out." She doubted they would; her leader was getting worse and worse by the day. The only good news was that by finding out Spottedstar's condition so quickly, they'd managed to isolate her so none of their other Clanmates were infected.

The conversation ended there. Cloverleaf padded over, brushing her pelt against Mintpool's. It was a sign of comfort, and it was warm against the cold night. "Are you sure it'll be okay?"

Mintpool sighed as she heard Rainpool and Nightstrike start a conversation, Ravenleaf jumping in soon after. "I sure hope so."

"Well, your mother's having kits soon," Cloverleaf prompted. "That's good, right?"

Mintpool forced a purr. "Yeah. It'll be good to have kits running around the place again." However, she didn't share her fear with Cloverleaf. The fear that they wouldn't have enough herbs to help her mother through the kitting.

"Let the Gathering begin!" Tigerstar's yowl pierced through the night. A hushed silence followed his words swiftly. The dark tom swept his tail as he, Moonstar, and Sunstar leapt up onto the tree, taking their spots on the branches. Thistlefur hurried to follow, his

leap towards the branch inexperienced compared to the other leaders.

"Everything is well in FireClan," Tigerstar meowed. "Those mange-pelts didn't dare to show their faces around FireClan territory." His amber eyes shone with delight. "We have three new warriors: Petalcloud, Blossomblaze, and Branchleap!"

The new warrior's names rang out into the clearing as Tigerstar gave a satisfied lash of his tail, motioning towards Moonstar.

Moonstar cleared her throat, stepping forward. "Leaf-bare has approached quicker than usual," she meowed, "and I'm afraid that our medicine cats are low on herbs." A murmur of agreement came from Rainpool and Cloverleaf. "However, so far, none of our cats has fallen sick. We hope that that will be the same for the rest of leaf-bare." She twitched her tail-tip. "We have two new apprentices: Honeypaw and Rainpaw! They are apprenticed to Leafwhisker and Squirreltail!"

Cheers boomed through the clearing.

Surprise shocked through Mintpool. *Leafwhisker has an apprentice?* Glancing at the brown tom, she noticed his eyes were dancing with delight as he nodded at a cream-and-white she-cat besides him. *That must be Honeypaw! She must be his apprentice!*

Mintpool twitched her pelt happily for the two, raising her muzzle to call out the new apprentice's names.

Sunstar gave his report quickly. Nothing much; just a couple cats had fallen sick to a cough, but Ravenleaf managed to heal them quickly, along with new apprentices. One of them was a medicine cat apprentice, Mistypaw. Mintpool had met her at the half-moon meeting. She liked the young she-cat. Mistypaw was gentle and patient. She would make a good medicine cat.

Now, all heads turned towards Thistlefur. Mintpool's stomach twisted. The rest of the Clans seemed extremely eager to hear about Spottedstar's condition.

Thistlefur cleared his throat. "Our cats have been training very hard due to the threat of the rogues," he meowed slowly. "The rogue scent seems to be getting thicker and thicker at the borders each day. We believe that they are gathering new recruits. Unfortunately, Spottedstar has fallen sick to whitecough, which has turned into greencough."

A murmur of unease spread throughout the clearing. Mintpool's pelt bushed with anxiety.

"Our medicine cats are trying the best they can to heal her," Thistlefur continued. "However, without catmint, they can only do so much." His pelt twitched. "Thankfully, they managed to isolate Spottedstar and stop any contamination. No other cat is sick."

Tigerstar angled his ears. "But the plan hasn't changed, right?"

Thistlefur flicked his tail-tip. "What do you mean?"

"Just because your leader has fallen sick doesn't mean you're backing out of the rogue plan, correct?" Tigerstar pressed.

Mintpool felt fury rising inside her. *Doesn't he care that Spottedstar is ill? He only cares about the rogues!* She knew the rogues were a big threat, but it was clear that the FireClan leader only cared about himself and his Clan. Even Moonstar and Sunstar's eyes widened with shock and their tail-tip twitched with anger.

Thistlefur's eyes glittered with cold fury as he lifted his muzzle coldly. "Nothing has changed. We are still going to participate in the attack."

Mintpool blinked at her deputy. He sat regally on top of the branch, his tail wrapped around his paws, the silver moonlight beaming against his pelt. He would make a good leader. And, as much as she hated to admit it, some day very soon, he would be sitting on that branch, not as a substitute for Spottedstar, but as the leader of AirClan.

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Word Count // 1182

Not Edited

Hi! What do you think of this chapter? A bit of a filler, but I used stuff from my Name that Apprentice book! For example, the names Petalcloud, Blossomblaze, and Branchleap all came from there! The people who came up with those names were pumpkinpii, Gorseclaw99, and AnaClaudiaHarghite. I wanted to make sure they got credit! Also, Mistypaw's in here, too! Anyway, the cat at the top is Thistlefur. That's all, bye!

Chapter 40

[image]

A yowl cut through the night. It awoke Mintpool instantly. The gray tabby, although half in daze of sleep, was on her paws within seconds. Echoleaf, too, stumbled upwards, her green eyes hazy and trying to blink away the sleep as quick as possible.

What's going on? Panic and worry clung to Mintpool tightly. *Are the rogues attacking?* However, as she angled her ears, trying to wake herself up and move efficiently at the same time, she noticed that she could near nothing except one set of paws hitting the ground. Waves of confusion hurled through her, and, exchanging a look from Echoleaf, the gray she-cat seemed to feel the same way.

A hacking cough sounded from the back of the den, bringing Mintpool's attention towards it. Her heart twisted. It was Spottedstar. Her leader, once so regal, was now sprawled out in the nest. Her golden fur was matted and in clumps, her ribs sticking out from her pelt, her eyes sunken. Blood was splattered around, for each cough seemed to bring up more and more blood.

It had been a moon, and the golden she-cat wasn't doing any better.

Suddenly, a brown cat burst into the medicine den. For a moment, Mintpool jumped, startled, before realizing that it was Leafstorm.

The brown tom's eyes were wide with worry. "Snowfrost's kits are coming!"

Echoleaf and Mintpool hurried into motion, leaping towards the herb storage. The gray tabby's muscles were taunt with worry as she blinked at the bare storage supplies.

"Go with Leafstorm for now," Echoleaf murmured to the tabby. "I'll be there soon."

Nodding, Mintpool and Leafstorm burst into the cold night air. With

a start, she noticed that it was snowing. Freezing white flurries pelted against her as she ran towards the nursery. Cats were stumbling out of their dens, looking confused and sleepy. She ignored them, ducking into the nursery as Leafstorm paused to inform their Clanmates on what was going on.

Inside, another shriek of pain pierced the air. Mintpool felt her belly twist as her gaze landed on Snowfrost. The white queen's eyes were clouded with pain and her legs kicked out wildly. Flowershine was at her head, licking her ears gently, her belly swollen as well. The gray tabby hurried towards her mother instantly.

"Oh, no..." Mintpool murmured. She and Echoleaf had both known that the birth would be extremely hard. They'd noticed moons ago that it seemed a kit would come paw first. They would have suggested for Snowfrost to sleep on her back and chew chervil. Except they had no chervil.

"Fetch her a stick," Mintpool meowed as Leafstorm ducked back into the nursery. The brown tom nodded, disappearing into the dark night.

As the gray tabby placed her paws on Snowfrost's belly, she felt her legs shaking. She'd never delivered kits before. She'd only ever watched Echoleaf do it. Then, however, Grassfeather's kitting had been easy. They had more than enough herbs and everything went smoothly. Now, she had no idea how it would turn out, especially with how inexperienced she was. She wished Echoleaf was here...

As soon as her thought flashed through her mind, the gray she-cat ducked into the den, clutching some shriveled up raspberry leaves in her jaws, setting it next to Snowfrost. "I figured it was better than nothing," she murmured softly as Snowfrost gulped down the herbs instantly, the pain fading away from her eyes slightly.

Echoleaf placed a paw on Snowfrost's belly as the white queen lashed her tail in agony. The medicine cat's eyes narrowed. "The kit isn't coming..."

Fear struck Mintpool as realization dawned on her. "It's stuck!"

Snowfrost let out a yowl of pain, the effect of the raspberry leaves gone. Her teeth were gritted together as another spam shook through her.

Echoleaf worked quickly. She placed a paw on Snowfrost's stomach, doing her best to adjust the kit, murmuring soft words of encouragement into the queen's ears. However, it wasn't like the white she-cat heard anything. Her blue eyes were clouded with pain as her tail lashed wildly, kicking out.

Mintpool ducked around, doing her best to help, but she just couldn't concentrate. She'd never helped deliver kits before! And, on top of that, with the sound of her mother's shrieks of pain echoing through her ears... it was hard to focus.

"Mintpool, place your paw here, please," Echoleaf murmured softly, and the gray tabby hurried to follow the instruction.

As Echoleaf drew her paws away, it only made Mintpool's stomach twist once more. She could feel the kit inside, wanting to come out. But its paws were still facing forward. Echoleaf's attempt to turn the kit hadn't worked.

"Push," Echoleaf murmured softly, coaxing Snowfrost.

The white queen lashed her tail as she heaved again. Mintpool could feel the bundle move forward, but the push also brought blood, too. The sight sent another pulse of worry through the gray tabby.

Leafstorm reappeared, a large stick clamped in his jaws. "Is she okay?"

Echoleaf didn't answer, her green eyes specked with anxiety, beckoning to the brown tom with her tail. "Bring the stick over."

Leafstorm hurried to follow her instruction, setting the stick down besides Snowfrost. "Here you go. The kit will be here soon. Just think of the new kit! I'm sure they'll be perfect." He continued murmuring comforting words into her ears, giving her head gentle licks. Flowershine had backed away long ago, watching the scene

with wide eyes.

Leafstorm's words seemed to give Snowfrost strength, although it didn't lessen any of the pain. And worry only grew in Mintpool's stomach. As hard as Snowfrost pushed, the bundle didn't seem to be moving. The kit would need oxygen. Otherwise it might die. And the blood that was coming was concerning. Extremely concerning.

Echoleaf's eyes were sunken and tired, full of worry, as she placed a paw on Snowfrost's belly once more. "Push."

This time, Mintpool could feel it move. A lot. Along with that came a whole lot of blood, but the excitement and hope overwhelmed the worry. "I can see it!" Her voice was bright. "I can see the sack!"

"Good job!" Leafstorm meowed. If he could see the blood, he didn't let it affect him. Perhaps to comfort Snowfrost. "See, you're doing so great! The kit will be here soon!"

Mintpool blinked. One more push would get the kit out. But it would certainly bring more blood. And she wasn't sure if Snowfrost could handle any more loss of blood. But then the kit wouldn't survive. Most likely, both would die.

The white queen's muscles strained from under Mintpool's paw. She lashed her tail, another yowl piercing the silence, her paws kicking out. As she opened her eyes, she seemed completely gone and unfocused. Her normally bright eyes were clouded as she pushed once more, a pool of blood following. A wet sack slid onto the moss.

"Good job!" Leafstorm's meow was bright, his green eyes cheerful as he lapped Snowfrost's ears. "You did it!"

"That's the only kit." Echoleaf's voice was tired. "Good job."

"Thank you." Snowfrost's voice was completely weak and worn out, cracked. "I'm exhausted. I think I'll take a nap now..."

Mintpool moved quickly towards the sack, her back facing Snowfrost as she nipped the sack open, revealing a shivering brown kit, her pelt almost identical to Leafstorm's. "Congratulations! A she-kit!"

However, her voice was greeted with no cheerful yowls. For a moment, she was puzzled. *Why isn't anyone happy?* Then, a though flashed through her mind, and panic seized her. *Could it be? No...*

The gray tabby whipped around, only to find Echoleaf's sorrow green gaze and Leafstorm's panicked murmurs as he licked Snowfrost hurriedly. "Come on, come on..." the brown tom was muttering. "Wake up. Look, the kit is here!"

Horror dawned on Mintpool. Her mother's white fur was tainted with red, blood pooling around her body. Her eyes were shut, everything still.

"Leafstorm..." Echoleaf's voice was gentle yet cracked with grief as she nudged the brown tom. "She's not breathing."

"No!" Leafstorm's voice was cracked. "It can't be!"

"She's lost too much blood..." Echoleaf crouched down besides the white queen's body.

With a noise of grief, Flowershine joined them, pushing her nose through Snowfrost's fur sadly. However, Mintpool couldn't move. She couldn't force herself to move. She stood, frozen still. *This is a dream. It has to be a dream!* She felt as though some cat had dumped a bucket of ice over her head. *This isn't real. It can't be real.*

However, she couldn't deny it. It was as clear as day. Snowfrost was gone.

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Word Count // 1434

Not Edited

Hi! Sorry that this chapter was poorly written. I don't have much experience with medicine cat things, and I'm not sure what a medicine cat would do if a kit was stuck. I just didn't really like this chapter in general, either. I'm probably going to rewrite it. Anyway, how do you think Adderclaw's going to react? Who do you think he'll blame for his mother's death?

Any predictions for the future? Let me know! The picture at the top is what the kit will look like when she grows up. Okay, that's all, bye!

Chapter 41

[image]

Mintpool couldn't wrap her mind around it. The fact that Snowfrost was gone. Dead. Her mother, now lay, dead, in front of her. The gray tabby stepped towards her numbly, burying her muzzle into her fur. Her pelt, once so warm and comforting, was cold and reeked of blood. *How is her body cold already?* Desperation and panic seized her as she struggled to keep herself together in front of her Clanmates. She didn't want to believe it. She wanted to keep her mother here, with her. But now, as her body lost its warmth, it seemed that she was truly gone.

The gray tabby felt numb, breathing in her mother's scent. She didn't even notice when Flowershine stumbled to her paws, ducking outside of the nursery to inform the others of what had happened. It was only Adderclaw's yowl of fury and grief that brought her out of her haze.

The black-and-white tom burst into the nursery, his eyes landing on Snowfrost's dead body. "No!" Grief was cracked in his voice as he bounded over towards the queen, throwing himself down besides his mother's body.

"I'm sorry, Adderclaw." It was Flowershine who spoke, padding back softly into the nursery to crouch besides her mate.

Mintpool had no words to comfort her brother. She could barely comfort herself. Leafstorm seemed to think the same, because he didn't lift his muzzle to glance at the black-and-white tom. Only Echoleaf managed a sympathetic glance towards him.

"I'll go give Thistlefur some more information." Her words were greeted by silence as she disappeared into the night, the sound of howling winds and falling snow filling the air.

"I'll give you some time," Flowershine meowed softly, giving Adderclaw's shoulder a gentle lick as she pushed herself up,

following Echoleaf's tracks.

Mintpool took in a shaky breath. *This is all my fault,* she thought miserably. *If I had just helped better, would Snowfrost be alive?* She shoved her muzzle deeper into her mother's cold fur. *What kind of medicine cat am I?*

The sound of moss rustling sounded besides her. Adderclaw had stood up. Mintpool turned her head to glance at her brother. Deep grief and sorrow lay in the depths of his gaze, but it was mostly covered by fury. She could barely meet his furious gaze.

"This is all your fault!" Adderclaw spat. He was glaring at Leafstorm, his pelt bristled. "Snowfrost wouldn't be dead if she wasn't trying to give birth to *your* kit!"

The kit! Mintpool blinked, startled. She turned towards the kit, pulling her into her pelt, licking her fur the wrong way to warm her up. The kit mewled hungrily, trying to sniff her belly for milk. The gray tabby nudged her sympathetically. *I have no milk for you, little one.*

"Adderclaw," Leafstorm began, pushing himself to his paws wearily, "I-"

He was cut off by Adderclaw whipping his furious gaze towards Mintpool, alerted by the sound of her grabbing the kit. "It's your fault, too," he snarled.

The gray tabby flinched. She'd never seen her brother so mad.

"You're a medicine cat!" Adderclaw growled. "What kind of medicine cat can't deliver kits? And there were *two*!" His tail lashed with fury.

Mintpool ducked her head. Adderclaw had just been voicing all the thoughts in her head. "I'm sorry. We tried-"

"Well obviously it wasn't enough." Her brother's eyes were lit with cold anger.

Just then, Echoleaf ducked into the nursery, Thistlefur on her tail.

Adderclaw's anger instantly turned on the gray she-cat.

"Why couldn't you save her?" he demanded, his pelt bushed until he was twice her size. "You've delivered countless litters before! For StarClan's sake, you even delivered me and Mintpool! Yet you couldn't do anything about Snowfrost?"

"Adderclaw, the kit was turned, so she was coming paw first," Echoleaf explained, her gaze sad. "Normally we would give her chervil to chew, but we had none. And the kit was turned the wrong way-"

Adderclaw cut her off with an angry lash of his tail, turning his glare back towards Leafstorm. "So what I'm hearing is that if you didn't bother Snowfrost, she would still be alive!"

Leafstorm opened his jaws, but Thistlefur spoke first.

"Enough, Adderclaw," Thistlefur cut in. "I understand you're grieving, but that's no reason to turn on one of your Clanmates!"

"One of my Clanmates wouldn't have killed my mother!" Adderclaw snarled. He glared at Mintpool once more. "Why are you *caring* for that kit? How could you? That kit killed Snowfrost!"

Mintpool, who'd kept quiet, letting him rant even though she knew he was wrong, now lashed her tail. "This kit did not kill Snowfrost!"

In her mind, this kit was now her closest connection to Snowfrost. Sure, Adderclaw's looks were more similar to her mother's, even inheriting her blue eyes, but his now eyes, blazing with anger, was nothing like Snowfrost's gentle and kind ones. She couldn't even recognize her brother anymore. How could he claim a kit killed their mother?

"This kit is Snowfrost's kit," she continued, her tail fur bushed. "If you care about Snowfrost as much as it seems then you would care for this kit as well!"

Adderclaw bared his teeth. "How is this even Snowfrost's kit? She looks just like Leafstorm!" He shot another hated glare towards the brown tom.

"You don't know that yet," Mintpool argued.

Adderclaw raised his muzzle. "This kit is a mistake! I wish she wasn't here! Then Snowfrost would still be here!"

A low growl came from Leafstorm as he leaped to his paws to defend his newborn daughter. Mintpool was horrified at his words, and Thistlefur's eyes were wide with shock.

Echoleaf stepped forward. "That's enough, Adderclaw," she snarled. "You may be grieving, but do *not* turn it on this kit."

"Adderclaw," Thistlefur meowed before the black-and-white tom could reply, "I think you need some time to calm down. Please go join Flowershine at the warriors den, please."

Adderclaw paused, looking shocked for a moment, before giving his tail another lash. "Fine. But I don't want Echoleaf or Mintpool delivering Flowershine's kits. It's clear that they can't do it safely."

The gray tabby felt as though her brother had just slashed her across the face, and clearly Echoleaf felt so as well, for her green eyes were stretched wide. Mintpool understood he was deep in grief, but was he really such a fool? To have Flowershine kit without medicine cats would have a even greater chance of danger! She wanted to protest, to say that Flowershine's kits were turned the right way and everything, but she couldn't find her voice.

"Don't be a fool!" Thistlefur growled. "To have Flowershine kitting without medicine cats has a greater change of something bad happening! Besides, it wasn't the medicine cats' fault! Do you really want something to happen to your mate because of your selfishness?"

His words seemed to have gotten into Adderclaw's mind, and the black-and-white tom twitched his tail in acknowledgement. "Fine." Without another word, he ducked out of the nursery.

Mintpool watched her brother disappear into the snow. She felt her whiskers twitch with grief as she lowered her head on her paws again, trying to control herself in front of her Clanmates. Her entire

life had twisted, even worse than when she and Leafwhisker stopped being friends. Nothing would be the same again - there would be no way to bring Snowfrost back, unlike with Leafwhisker. Then, at least, there was a small chance they might be friends again. But there was no chance Snowfrost would return. Her mother had left her too soon.

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Word Count // 1251

Not Edited

Hi! So, this chapter is a bit of a filler, but I still have some questions that I'm wondering about. So, what did you think of Adderclaw's outburst? I definitely think he was way too angry and out of it. Okay, that's all, bye!

Chapter 42

[image]

Large gusts of winds roared outside of the nursery as Mintpool stepped back from Flowershine's nest. Four healthy kits, newborns, squirmed at the ginger queen's belly. The gray tabby sighed, weary but pleased. Flowershine's kits had come much easier than Snowfrost's, and she's managed to deliver them by herself.

"Congratulations, Flowershine," the gray tabby purred. "Four healthy kits! Three toms and a she-kit."

Flowershine nodded, not caring to reply, as she wrapped herself around her kits, giving their heads swift licks. Mintpool restrained a roll of her eyes. *Even after she's just given birth, she still has the same attitude.* The gray tabby's gaze drifted towards Adderclaw, who was crouched besides the nest, wondering if her brother had calmed down and forgiven her.

It was a moon after Snowfrost's death, although the pain was just as harsh. Adderclaw seemed out of it for the entire moon, barely talking to any cat, his eyes always sad of angry. However, now Mintpool was pleased to see her brother's eyes light up and joy and love as he nuzzled his mate and kits.

The gray tabby sighed again. Although new kits always made her happy, it wasn't enough to erase the heavy sadness that still lingered. Too much had happened this moon, with her mother dying and her leader going soon after...

Mintpool felt her pelt twitch. Spottedstar had died a couple days after Snowfrost. Everything had moved too quickly; the tabby barely had time to process it. Before she knew it Echoleaf was bringing Thistlefur to the Moonpool, and soon after they returned, Thistlefur being Thistlestar, and him appointing Skystorm as deputy.

Although, she supposed, it was normal. Life and death were a just a

part of things. Snowfrost is gone, but her kit, whom Leafstorm had named Lilykit, was here, curled up and asleep in her nest. And, Spottedstar's gone, but Flowershine brought four healthy kits into the Clan.

Adderclaw blinked at Mintpool, ducking his head almost grudgingly, as though saying thank you. Warmth spread throughout the gray tabby as she replied with a happy flick of her tail. Another thought formed in her mind. *Since Flowershine has kits now, maybe Lilykit will be able to share her milk...*

However, she wasn't sure if that would work. Adderclaw already has a deep dislike for Lilykit, and Flowershine has four kits. She might not have enough milk... Mintpool sighed. *Lilykit will just have to continue eating mashed up prey, I suppose.*

Mintpool gazed at the kits. They were all beautiful. However, one in particular caught her eye. The only she-kit. She had a fluffy white pelt with spots of black, looking similar to Snowfrost. The gray tabby ruffled her pelt, glancing at Adderclaw, hoping that he would name her after their mother. "Have you decided on names yet?"

Flowershine and Adderclaw exchanged a glance. "I suppose so." The ginger queen twitched her tail-tip, touching a ginger-and-white tom. "This one will be Bumblekit."

"How about Sunkit for this one?" Adderclaw suggested, nodding at a fully ginger tom-kit.

"Great," Flowershine agreed. "And this one can be called Flamekit." She nodded to an orange tom with black stripes that looked like flames.

Both parents' gazes turned towards the white kit. Mintpool blinked hopefully at Adderclaw as he studied the little white kit for a name. His blue eyes were conflicted, as though thinking about naming her Snowkit. The gray tabby twitched her tail-tip hopefully.

"Spotkit?" Flowershine suggested.

"Oh." Adderclaw twitched his pelt. "Sure."

Mintpool blinked at him, feeling disappointment worm in her belly. *Enough, Mintpool. They're Flowershine's kits, too.* However, she couldn't still help but wish that Spotkit had been named Snowkit.

The gray tabby stood up. "Beautiful names. I'll go tell Thistlestar," she meowed, ducking outside of the den. A strong gust of wind blew against her, chilling her to the bone. However, thankfully, Thistlestar was already in the clearing, waiting. With a simple flick of her tail to alert him, he ducked into the nursery to greet the kits.

Mintpool continued to the medicine den. Her paws felt weary; she wanted nothing more than to curl up and sleep. As she ducked into the den, her gaze landed on Echoleaf, who was pacing around.

The gray she-cat's eyes lit up when she saw her. "Is everything okay? Did Flowershine's kits come safely? Do you need my help for anything?"

Mintpool twitched her whiskers, feeling half amused at Echoleaf's worrying, half annoyed that the gray she-cat didn't seem to completely trust she could deliver kits on her own. "They're fine. Four healthy kits."

"That's great!" Echoleaf purred. "I'm happy that you delivered them so well, Mintpool."

The gray tabby ducked her head.

"I'll go see them," Echoleaf continued, bounding out of the den.

Mintpool yawned, watching her disappear. The gray tabby was exhausted. She padded over to her nest, curling up inside, tucking her head into her paws. Before long, sleep washed over her.

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Mintpool padded along EarthClan's border, her green gaze scanning the terrain. A thin layer of snow covered everything; there would be no way that any herbs would survive. Near the edges of the border, she spotted a bush with wide leaves, spreading downwards. Snow bushed on top of the leaves. However, the leaves could be great shelter for critters, nuts... herbs, perhaps.

It was a crazy thought - it was freezing! However, Mintpool felt desperation seize her. *It's worth a try.* She bounded over, thrusting her head under the bush. Excitement lit up inside her as she found a couple stalks of comfrey. Her tail swished with delight as she picked a couple sprigs. Echoleaf will be so happy when she sees this!

Suddenly, the gray tabby heard paw steps pad from behind her. She angled her ears, trying to listen. It sounded like... three sets of paws. A patrol, most likely.

The paws stopped as she heard bushes rustle. "What are you doing in there?" A familiar and amused voice came from behind her. Leafwhisker.

Mintpool wiggled out of the bush quickly, embarrassment warming her pelt, the sprigs still in her jaws. The brown tom stood in front of her, his green eyes unreadable, yet his whiskers twitching with amusement.

As the gray tabby glanced around, she felt her pelt twitch, puzzled. The only cat she could see was Leafwhisker, yet she was sure she heard two other sets of paws... she shook that thought off. "I was collecting herbs." Her voice came out somewhat embarrassed. "I found some comfrey! Does EarthClan need any?"

Leafwhisker twitched his tail-tip. "I'm not sure... I think you'll have to ask Cloverleaf. I've never been good with herbs."

This earned a light purr from Mintpool. "So, what are you doing out here? Border patrol?" It was odd, though, that it was just him who was doing the patrol.

"Actually, I wanted to ask you something..." Leafwhisker trailed off. "You remember how you said you would do anything to make it up to me?"

Mintpool sat up straighter, eager. "Yeah!" Had he thought of something? Could they be friends again?

Leafwhisker cleared his throat. "Well, I-"

Suddenly, the bushes from AirClan's side rustled. Robinflight

appeared, closely followed by Whitewhisker, Riverfrost, and Violetpaw.

The brown she-cat's eyes narrowed suspiciously at Mintpool and Leafwhisker. "What are you two doing here?"

Mintpool felt her pelt spike guiltily, as though she were an apprentice caught sneaking out of camp. *You're not an apprentice, though. You're a medicine cat.* The gray tabby twitched her tail-tip. "I don't need to answer you, Robinflight. However, if you must know, I've been collecting herbs." She held up the sprigs as though it were some proof.

"And you?" Robinflight demanded to Leafwhisker.

Whitewhisker touched his tail-tip to her shoulder. "We shouldn't bother with another Clan's business," he murmured.

"Fine." Robinflight still didn't look convinced, shaking off his tail, and beginning to move up the border.

As soon as they were out of sight, Leafwhisker whispered hurriedly, "Meet me here tomorrow at dusk." With that, he turned and disappeared into a bush.

Mintpool turned, trotting towards the direction of camp, her paws tingling. *Hopefully after tomorrow me and Leafwhisker can be friends again!* As the camp was in sight, another thought formed in her mind. *I wonder what he wants.*

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Word Count // 1358

Not Edited

Hi! Another chapter is out! Any thoughts with Flowershine and Adderclaw's new kits? Do you think they should've named the kit Snowkit instead of Spotkit? And, for the second half, what do you think Leafwhisker's going to want? Why did Mintpool hear three sets of paws when she could only see one cat? Any thoughts on that? Is there just something wrong with her

hearing, or is it something else? Let me know your thoughts! The cat at the top is Spotkit, when she grows up. Okay, that's all, bye!

Chapter 43

[image]

Night was falling by the time Mintpool snuck out of AirClan's camp. A chilly breeze rippled through the clearing, freezing her to the bone. Her paws felt frozen already as she began the trip to EarthClan's forest.

It was quite difficult to sneak out of the camp. Because of the rogue threat, Thistlestar had posted two cats instead of one for guarding. Now, instead of having to convince one cat, she had to convince two. And, just as her terrible luck expected, Robinflight was one of those cats tonight. The brown she-cat was suspicious of her enough already! So, Mintpool had to sneak out of the dirt-place.

Now, the gray tabby's nose wrinkled, for she could still smell the scent of the dirt-place on her pelt.

The night was going pretty badly for her already. Everything felt frozen cold and her pelt stunk. *At least it can't get better.* As though some force of nature heard her thoughts and took it as a taunt, soft, fluffy snow started falling from the sky.

Mintpool's tail lashed as she glared up at the black sky. *For StarClan's sake!* she thought irritably. *I didn't think I could get any colder.* Huffing, she picked up her pace, trying to get to the border and back to her nest as quickly as possible. *At least the dirt-place scent will be gone.*

Soon, the familiar EarthClan border was in sight. Mintpool's green gaze scanned EarthClan's side, trying to spot Leafwhisker in the dark.

Suddenly, the bushes rustled. *That must be him!* The gray tabby opened her jaws, about to call out a greeting, when she heard Leafwhisker's low murmur. "Stay here, okay? I'll be right back. Don't move."

Confusion rippled through the gray tabby. *Who's he talking to?* "Leafwhisker?" she called.

The brown tom's head poked out of the bush, his green eyes wide and startled. "Oh, hi, Mintpool!" he meowed. "I didn't think you'd be here already."

Mintpool's whiskers twitched with amusement as he made his way out of the bush to join her besides the border. "Well, you did tell me to meet you at dusk. In fact, I believe it's past that."

The EarthClan tom ducked his head. "Yeah. It was a bit harder to get here than expected."

"What do you mean?" Mintpool tilted her head. "Was it hard to convince the guards? Did Moonstar put extra guards for the rogues, too?"

For a moment, Leafwhisker's face went black, before he nodded hurriedly. "Er... yeah, sure."

The gray tabby flicked her ears. Although Leafwhisker seemed warmer than before, he certainly didn't trust her like he did when they were younger. She waited for him to continue, but he was silent, staring at his paws as his brown pelt was coated in soft, fluffy snow, unmoving, as though the sharp coldness didn't bother him at all.

Mintpool whisked her tail, slightly annoyed. He might have all the time in the world, but she wanted to get back to her nest as quickly as possible. "So, why did you call me to meet you here?"

Leafwhisker's gaze raised from his paws instantly. "Right! Sorry, I was just in thought."

The gray tabby tilted her head. His eyes were more readable now and she could see... sadness? *Why is he sad?* And the sadness wasn't any basic sadness, either. It was much deeper. Grief? Was that it? Mintpool shook out her pelt. She knew grief; she'd just lost two important cats in one moon! *Is he trying to keep something away from me?*

"It's no problem." The gray tabby flicked her tail. "So, what do you need?"

"Oh..." Leafwhisker trailed off again, clearing his throat, shuffling his paws. "Well... er, you remember Luna?"

Mintpool twitched her pelt. "Yeah." She wasn't a huge fan of Luna. She found it odd that some random rogue would look so similar to her. *Well, maybe that's not it. Maybe gray tabbies with green eyes are normal.* She didn't know, but she really didn't like how Luna looked so much like her. It gave her a bad feeling. And, more than that, she didn't like how Luna had appeared in one of her visions. Her visions were normally to warn her of bad things...

Leafwhisker, on the other paw, seemed to love Luna. When they were apprentices, she knew he made many trips up to the strange forest to visit her. And, even now, she'd caught his scent around a month ago, going up to the forest.

"Right, well, you see... she's dead now." Leafwhisker's eyes sparked with more grief at that statement. "A fox killed her."

"Oh..." Although Mintpool hadn't liked Luna that much, she still felt a heavy sadness flow through her. "That's terrible." Through her grief, however, she felt her tail twitch with confusion. *What does that have to do with me?*

"Mhm..." Leafwhisker hesitated before he spoke again. "And, she had two kits, who are now left behind."

Mintpool's tail stood up straight with surprise. "Oh my StarClan! That's terrible!" Her mind whirled. *Is that why he needs me? Do they need healing? That still didn't feel right. Why wouldn't he just ask Cloverleaf, then? Oh, right,* she realized. *She's very strict on the rules.* She remembered how Leafwhisker had said the brown-and-white she-cat probably wouldn't wish to join them on their meetings because of such. "Are they hurt? Do you need me to heal them?"

"Nope, they're healthy enough," Leafwhisker meowed. "They're old enough to eat prey. They don't know how to hunt, though..." He cleared his throat again. "And they do need a place to stay."

"Like... you want me to help build a den for them?"

"Well, I'd need to check on the regularly, and bring them prey," Leafwhisker meowed, "and I can't do that. My Clan will get suspicious." He hesitated before meowing his next words. "I was wondering if they could stay in AirClan."

Mintpool's ears pressed back with surprise. "*What?*" She couldn't believe her ears! Was Leafwhisker really asking if she could take in Luna's kits into AirClan? Why? It made no sense! Why her? Why did he care about them so much? She understood they were friends, but why did he ask her to take them into AirClan? She and Luna weren't friends. For StarClan's sake, if he cared about them so much, why didn't he bring them into EarthClan?

"They need a place to stay," Leafwhisker meowed slowly. "And cats to take care of them. They need a Clan."

Mintpool lashed her tail in frustration and shock. "If they need a Clan, why not EarthClan?"

"Mintpool, you know why!" Leafwhisker mewed. "You know how strict EarthClan is on the Warrior Code! We haven't taken in a loner since... I don't even know. Maybe we've never taken in a loner! They won't accept these kits. Besides, they'll wonder where the kits came from. And I don't know how to explain that."

Mintpool ducked her head in agreement. If Leafwhisker did bring these kits to EarthClan and their parents were questioned... well, the answer of 'I've been meeting a loner ever since I was an apprentice secretly and became friends then she died and these are her kits' didn't seem to be a very good one. And Moonstar was smart; she wouldn't believe if Leafwhisker just found these kits.

"But why can't they live with their father?" Mintpool meowed.

Leafwhisker ducked his head, looking... ashamed? The gray tabby ruffled her pelt. No, she must've interpreted that wrong.

"Well..." Leafwhisker began slowly, "these are my kits."

If Mintpool could be any more shocked, she certainly was now. She

gaped at the brown tom, her tail-tip twitching with absolute surprise. *Leafwhisker's kits? He had kits with Luna?* Suddenly she realized why his gaze was glowing with such grief and why he was so hesitant to ask her of this. He didn't want to admit that he had kits with a loner! And, if his Clan were to find out...

"Mintpool, please," Leafwhisker mewed. "They can't live with me. I would take care of them, but I don't have enough time for that. I have an apprentice, and I can't just abandon my responsibilities, especially with the battle with the rogues coming up so soon. You said you would do anything to make it up to me! You promised. Please, I won't ever ask you of anything else."

"But what if *my* Clan asks me of their parents?" Mintpool asked.

"You can say you found them in the woods," Leafwhisker replied quickly, as if he had it all figured out. "It's more believable for a medicine cat. And no cat would think that they were yours."

The gray she-cat twitched her tail-tip uncertainly. She wasn't sure if the plan would work... however, with Leafwhisker staring at her, pleading with his eyes, she couldn't say no. Besides, AirClan needed more kits. They would welcome them. Right?

"Okay," Mintpool agreed at last. "Very well. I'll come get them tomorr-"

"Wait, I have them here!" Leafwhisker meowed quickly. "They're in those bushes." He turned towards the bushes he'd come out of. "You can come out now."

The sound of small paws crunching the snow sounded as two fluffy kits made their way out of the bush. One was a gray tabby tom-kit, and the other was a brown she-kit. Two pairs of identical green eyes blinked at Mintpool.

"This is Storm and Fern," Leafwhisker introduced. "Well, I suppose Stormkit and Fernkit, now."

Mintpool nodded slowly, realizing that the reason she'd heard three sets of paws the other day was because the other two sets belonged

to Stormkit and Fernkit. *Leafwhisker brought them with him yesterday! It was as if he knew I would say yes!*

She blinked, trying to look as warm as possible. "Hello."

"Hi," Stormkit squeaked in reply, snow coating his gray pelt. Fernkit shivered from besides him.

Leafwhisker gave his kits' heads quick licks. "This is Mintpool. Follow her, okay?" As the two kits nodded, he pulled back, blinking at Mintpool. "Thank you."

The gray tabby dipped her head, worry still squirming in her belly. "It's no problem. I'll keep them safe for you. I promise." Another promise. She wanted to internally yowl at herself to stop making so many. But the way Leafwhisker blinked at his kits... well, she could tell he loved them.

With another lick on his kits' heads, Leafwhisker retreated, casting another look at them before disappearing into EarthClan's forest.

Mintpool swept her tail, gathering the kits towards her flanks. They huddled towards her instantly, shivering from the snow. "Come on. Let's get you two to camp."

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Word Count // 1768

Not Edited

Hi! Sorry that the chapter's so long; it's a lot longer than usual. A lot of stuff happened in this chapter. So, I think the future is kind of obvious now, of what's going to happen. Still, I want to hear your version of it. Any thoughts? Let me know! Okay, that's all. The picture at the top is Stormkit and Fernkit. Bye!

Chapter 44

[image]

Snow fell harder and faster as Mintpool travelled back to AirClan's camp with Leafwhisker's kits. They were huddled at her flank, trying to use her body as a shield from the wind and snow. The flurries had gathered on the ground, rising up to Mintpool's ankles. It was all the way up to the poor kits' chins.

"How much further?" Fernkit asked, her teeth chittering.

The gray tabby leaned down, giving her head a swift lick, trying to warm her up. She's probably going to get a cold! We might not have enough herbs to cure that. "Just a little further." Squinting through the flurries, she even doubted herself whether or not she was going the right direction. White snow whipped everywhere; she couldn't see a thing! And scenting her way would do no good, either. The snow covered all the scents.

Mintpool felt as though her paws were freezing off and her entire body was frozen. She couldn't even imagine how the kits felt. "Let's fine somewhere to rest for the night," she murmured. She knew it wasn't the best idea, but they were all going to be frozen solid by the time they reached camp.

She gazed around, trying to see through the snowstorm. Wrapping her tail around the kits, making sure she didn't loose them, she led them forward wildly. Frustration pummeled her. She couldn't see a single thing! Suddenly, she halted, almost bumping into a tree.

As she blinked at the trunk, recognition and relief filled her. They were at the Training Hollow! It was a downward slope, with trees and earth hovering over it. Not as good as a warm den, but it would be better than standing out in the cold.

"Come on," Mintpool meowed, pulling the kits into the hollow.

It felt warmer instantly. Although the trees didn't provide warmth,

it gave them shelter, blocking them from the furious sleets of snow. The gray tabby instantly busied herself with drying Fernkit and Stormkit. As soon as the kits were warm again, they yawned, settling into her pelt.

"Good night," Fernkit mumbled sleepily as Stormkit echoed her words.

"Good night," Mintpool mewed back, watching the two kits drift off to sleep. Settling her head on her paws, she closed her eyes. Exhaustion washed over her, and she was asleep within minutes.

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A thump startled Mintpool awake. She blinked her eyes open, leaping onto her paws wildly. Fernkit and Stormkit mumbled a sleepy protest as her warm pelt left them. Bright sunlight beamed onto Mintpool's face and she irritably squinted her eyes to try and see.

Bright, fluffy snow coated everything. It was all a winder wonderland! Everything was covered in snow. The branches were thick with ice and dipped under the weight of the flurries.

Suddenly, another thump sounded, followed by an annoyed meow. "Woah! There's snow everywhere!" Mintpool recognized that voice instantly. Adderclaw.

"Let's go." A new voice, Robinflight's, now tainted the air. "We need to find this mouse-brained cat. Why she would wander off in the middle of a stormy night, I don't know."

Are they talking about me? Mintpool's pelt bushed up at Robinflight calling her a mouse-brain, and her anger only piled when Adderclaw didn't defend her. Parting her jaws, her brother and Clanmate's scent floated in.

"Mintpool?" Stormkit's sleepy mew sounded from her paws. "What's happening?"

"What was that?" Robinflight's voice was sharp. "Did you hear that, Adderclaw?"

"Hear what?" her brother replied.

"I heard a voice." Silence. Then, paw steps began to crunch the snow. "Come out! You're on AirClan's territory!"

"I found Mintpool's scent!" Adderclaw's voice was excited.

"Forget that," Robinflight's voice snapped. "There's an intruder."

Mintpool stifled an annoyed sigh. "I'm over here!" she called. Might as well tell them where I am rather than have them find me. Otherwise they'll think I'm hiding something.

"Mintpool!" Adderclaw's voice sounded relived as his paw steps travelled towards them, quick and light, bounding. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Mintpool replied. "I'm in the Training Hollow."

Moments later, Adderclaw's head poked into the Training Hollow as he eased his way in. His eyes were relived as he caught sight of the gray tabby. "Mintpool! Thank StarClan you're oka-" He cut off as his gaze now landed on the kits.

"Hi!" Fernkit squeaked. "I'm Fern!"

Stormkit nudged her. "*Fernkit*, not Fern."

The brown tabby's nose scrunched. "Oh, right. I'm Fernkit. What's your name?"

Adderclaw's eyes were stretched wide. "Mintpool...?"

"Your name is Mintpool too?" Fernkit angled her head, blinking at Mintpool then Adderclaw.

The gray tabby's whiskers twitched with amusement before turning towards her brother. "Here I can explain-"

Just then, Robinflight slid in as well, her gaze landing on Fernkit and Stormkit first. "Kits!" Her mew was accusing as she swerved her gaze towards Mintpool. "Thistlestar will want to hear about this."

"I know, I'll bring them to him," Mintpool replied. "I just-"

"Quiet," Robinflight snapped. "I don't want to hear any of your "explanations". We'll have Thistlestar decide what to do."

"What?" Mintpool blinked at her. "What in StarClan are you talking about?"

Robinflight shot her a glare as she picked Fernkit up by the scruff. "Are you mouse-brained? You broke the code!"

"*What?*" Mintpool shot to her paws as Adderclaw got Stormkit.

"Oh, don't try and play dumb," Robinflight grumbled. "They are your kits!"

Are they mouse-brained? "For StarClan's sake-"

"Enough!" Robinflight whisked her tail. "Save your explanation for Thistlestar."

Mintpool whirled around to Adderclaw. "Adderclaw, you're sensible, right? You don't believe this mouse-brained accusation, do you?"

Her brother shuffled his paws as they set off. "Well, Mintpool, this looks pretty bad for you," he murmured. "You disappeared in the middle of the night, and reappeared with kits."

"Yeah, but-"

"I suppose Thistlestar will decide what to do," Adderclaw mewed. "What you tell me will have no effect."

Growling in frustration, the gray tabby stormed back to camp with Adderclaw and Robinflight. *I can't believe what they're accusing me of!*

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"And so, I heard these kits," Mintpool explained, "and I found them. They were cold and freezing, so I decided to take them in and bring them back to camp. However, it was snowing too hard to see, so we

spent the night in the Training Hollow."

Thistlestar's eyes were narrowed as he stared at Mintpool, taking in her words. The entire Clan was silent, but the gray tabby could feel their eyes on her pelt. The Clan had gone into an uproar to see that Robinflight and Adderclaw had brought her back with kits. Now, Thistlestar had calmed them down, and was listening to her story. Fernkit and Stormkit were in the nursery. Flowershine had offered to take them in, hiding them from the Clan's anger. Why she suddenly had a change of heart, Mintpool didn't know. Perhaps she was just following the Warrior Code.

Half of it was true. The other half was not. Mintpool prayed to StarClan that the new leader would believe her. *Please, StarClan! I was only trying to help!*

Finally, the AirClan leader whisked his tail. "So you found these kits?"

"Yes," Mintpool replied eagerly, "on the border that connects us with the Upper Forest."

"What were you doing up there?" Thistlestar narrowed his eyes. "Echoleaf's informed me that there's no herbs up there, and it's very far from the camp. You're very wise, Mintpool; it's not like you to wander so far from camp during a snowstorm."

The gray tabby gulped. "Well, I was trying find herbs, since I found some comfrey under some bushes the other day... I started wandering farther and farther until I reached there..."

She met Thistlestar's unbelieving gaze and ducked her head. "So you found kits that were right on the border?"

Mintpool nodded. "Yes."

"And their mother was nowhere to be seen?"

"No," the gray tabby replied. "They were just out by themselves, mewling hungrily."

At this, Thistlestar seemed to believe her, his gaze softening. It was

a cold leaf-bare; it was easy to believe that their mother had been killed by some hungry predator, which she had.

"Very well," the brown tom meowed, "I-"

"Thistlestar, wait!" Robinflight's angry yowl sounded from the crowd.

Every cats' gaze whipped towards her, but she didn't seem to care, her brown pelt bristled. "You're just going to let Mintpool get away without a punishment?"

"Punishment?" Thistlestar drew to his full height. "What do you mean?"

Robinflight lashed her tail. "It's obvious that these kits are hers! Don't believe her lies!"

Fury pounded through Mintpool. "What-"

Robinflight's yowl echoed through the clearing. "It's clear that these kits are her and Leafwhisker's! They talk all the time! I keep finding her at EarthClan's border, talking to him! And they always talk during Gatherings, too. No cat can have that relationship with another cat and remain friends!" Her gaze hardened before Mintpool had a chance to protest. "And, the kits are a brown tabby and a gray tabby! They look exactly like if Mintpool and Leafwhisker had kits, which they did!"

Murmurs rippled throughout the Clan. Mintpool's pelt bristled. *I can't believe they're believing Robinflight!* She opened her jaws once more, trying to reply, but Robinflight continued.

"Are you really just going to believe that the mother died? She said she found these kits by the border! Well, no mother would just abandon their kits at the border! That's mouse-brained! And, if she was killed by, say, a fox, wouldn't the fox's scent be at the border as well, with blood? The kits couldn't have just crawled to the border by themselves, the mother must've taken them! Which means the mother's death, or at least signs of her death, would be at the borders! And, if there is a fox, why aren't the kits dead as well?"

Yowls of agreement followed Robinflight's words.

"She broke the medicine code!"

"And the Warrior Code!"

"Kick her out!"

"Exile her!"

Mintpool felt her jaws drop open in surprise. Were her Clanmates really so willing to exile her? She turned around to gaze at them. Many had their pelts bristled, their lips pulled back into snarls as they glared at her. She spotted Iceclaw amongst them. Her old friend's eyes were filled with hatred as he stared at her. The only cats she could see that didn't agree with Robinflight were Echoleaf and Adderclaw. They both kept silent, their eyes dancing around, refusing to meet her gaze.

Thistlestar nodded. "Robinflight's words make sense." He turned to Mintpool. "Mintpool, you are no longer welcome in AirClan for breaking both the Warrior and medicine cat code. Get out."

Mintpool stumbled back, as though the leader had used his claws to rake her. She was horror struck. "Thistlestar-"

The new leader's gaze seemed conflicted. However, he had to remain a confident front for his Clanmates. "Robinflight, please escort her to the Upper Forest border, where she "found these kits"."

With a nod, Robinflight started forward, pushing Mintpool towards the entrance. The gray tabby couldn't wrap her mind around this. She was being exiled? As she gazed at her Clanmates, she couldn't spot a single splash of regret in their eyes. Another emotion began washing away the shock. Anger.

"You will regret this," Mintpool hissed, lashing her tail. "That is my final promise to you all." With that, she turned around, head and tail high, strutting out of the camp.

Word Count // 1870

Not Edited

Hi! Finally, the chapter where Mintpool is exiled! Any thoughts on it? I don't really have any questions; I just want to hear what you think. This chapter is a LOT longer than normal, but there was a lot of stuff I wanted to fit in. There was three different scenes, I think. Anyway, tell me your thoughts! I'll be releasing a comparison chapter right after this, one where I have pictures of Mintpool, Leafwhisker, and the kits, so you can see whether or not they look like a family altogether. I might also put Luna in there. The cat at the top is Robinflight (pretend she has white paws & chest). Okay, that's all, bye!

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Mintpool

[image]

Leafwhisker

[image]

Stormkit & Fernkit

[image]

Luna

[image]

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So, all together, what do you think? Do you think they could look like a family? Can you kind of see why Mintpool's Clanmates would say that these were her kits? And yeah, now that I look at the picture, Luna does look kind of young, but she is a full grown cat. Okay, that's all, bye!

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[image]

Hi! Okay, so, first, I wanted to say thank you so much for reading Mintpool's Promise! I am beyond grateful, and I love reading all your comments and thoughts!

I thought this would be a pretty good place to end the book. It's already pretty long, and it ends with Mintpool's life completely changing. Because of that, I decided to make a second book for that. It's called Mintpool's Venom, and it'll be about her getting her revenge. It'll probably be out by today or tomorrow, no later than that!

So, again, thank you all so, so much for reading and commenting on Mintpool's Promise! Thank you for the 1.6k reads and 200+ votes! That's crazy, and I'm very grateful for that.

Have a wonderful week! See you in Mintpool's Venom. Bye!